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Carol Michaelsen  
*University of Central Florida*

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HENRY JAMES, VIRGINIA WOOLF, AND FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: INTERIORITY,  
CONSCIOUSNESS, TIME, AND SPACE IN THE MODERNIST NOVEL AND THE HOME

by

CAROL PRIVETTE MICHAELSEN  
B.A. Rollins College Brevard 2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

During the Modernist period, generally defined between the years 1890 and 1945, artists were attempting to break away from previous forms and styles. For example, writers like Henry James and Virginia Woolf sought to change the novel by exploring the consciousness of characters, while playing with the ideas of time and space to create the present moment. The thesis explores the modernist techniques used by James and Woolf, but also connects the work of the writers with the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Using Joseph Frank's theory of spatial form, my work explores the similarities between Wright's designs of private residences with the design of space in the novel. All three artists, I argue, are working with spatial form, blending interior with exterior, to provide the reader and the dweller with the opportunity to experience an organic unity, which ultimately results in a freezing of the moment. In addition to Frank's theory, I also incorporate Stanley Fish and Reader Response theory and William James's *Principles of Psychology*. The reader and the dweller must actively engage with the structure, whether a text or the home, to develop and realize the possibilities of spatial form. Also, William James's ideas about the mind and consciousness influenced Henry James and Virginia Woolf, especially in their focus on character, rather than description.

I have chosen James's *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Wings of the Dove* along with Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* to study with Wright's Prairie and Usonian residences. Each chapter looks at one novel and Wright's corresponding work during approximately the same time period. By connecting literature and architecture, the thesis provides new ways of thinking about the two disciplines, especially concerning interiority and consciousness. James, Woolf, and Wright are all experimenting with time and space to create a unified experience, and the striking parallels between their work deserves more attention.

For Matilda

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

*The enclosed space within . . . is the reality of the building.*  
Frank Lloyd Wright

When we stand inside our homes or place ourselves within the intricate space of a novel, what do we find? Are we simply standing in arbitrary, formless abysses that have no spatial continuity? Readers in the early nineteenth century most often opened a novel looking for a sequenced story, one that had a definite beginning, and then proceeded in an even, methodical pace to a secure and comfortable ending. Typical dwellers of Victorian houses in America similarly chose homes that satisfied their idea of living space—copycats of European ornamental styles—spaces that were comfortable, predictable, and socially acceptable. In the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, new ways of looking at space in novels and houses emerged. Partly because of the Industrial Revolution and the new focus on machines and practicality, architects like Frank Lloyd Wright felt that a use of more organic materials would result in a unified, simplistic style that would better reflect the changing landscape. Likewise, writers, in light of new ideas about the human mind, were questioning the sequenced style of novels. Character development, in part, became more important than plot. Delving into the conscious or even the unconscious mind of a character presented a more realistic depiction of the self. Henry James and Virginia Woolf, for instance, both believed in what Joseph Frank refers to as “an organic unity” (11) in their work. J.A. Ward says, “James delights ‘in deep-breathing economy and an organic form’” (6). This unity of character and consciousness in James’s work is equally found in Woolf’s writings. For example, Jeanne Schulkind in her introduction to a collection of Woolf’s autobiographical writings argues that Woolf’s novels pose questions about life, love, reality, and individual discovery. These questions, Schulkind maintains, lead to “the vision of

reality as a timeless unity which lies beneath the appearance of change, separation, and disorder that marks daily life” (18). The late-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-centuries are perfect times to study the elements of change, disorder, and unity in both literature and architecture. My examination of three Modernist artists—James, Wright, and Woolf—will illustrate what they considered to be an alternate solution to the idea of novels and houses as just typical everyday spaces; additionally, my interdisciplinary study will illuminate the extraordinary similarities among the three artists, particularly their ability to achieve spatiality in novels and houses. Specifically, the three artists create a freezing of the moment in their spatial approaches to novels and homes. Using the abstract ideas of space and time, James, Wright, and Woolf also produced work that embodied new thought concerning the human mind. Along with space and time, interiority and consciousness are two elements that are crucial to the organic work of all three artists, and represent just a taste of the connective possibilities of Modernist literature and architecture.

To help answer the question of why late-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century readers and dwellers were looking for a new way of experiencing space, I will touch on the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and the consciousness techniques of William James, applying these ideas to the work of Henry James, Woolf, and Wright. William James’s *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) is the text I will draw from, but as James says about Kant—“Kant’s own statements are too lengthy and obscure for verbatim quotation” (232)—I also say about James. But knowing that William was such an integral part of Henry’s development of character in the novel, I will apply some of William’s more general ideas about the consciousness of the self to literature and architecture. In addition to William James and Freud, my study will incorporate Stanley Fish’s *Is There a Text in This Class*, (1980) working with

Reader Response theory to merge the unique combination of spatial considerations of the text and the home with the consciousness of the reader and the dweller.

Primarily, however, I will study James, Woolf, and Wright in relation to Joseph Frank's *The Idea of Spatial Form*. Spatial form builds on Imagism, a poetic movement that occurred during the years before and immediately after World War I. Ezra Pound's definition of the image is an important precursor to studying spatial form in literature: "An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (qtd. in Frank 11). Modern poetry presented images, not through pictures, but through language. Applying Pound's definition directly to literature, Frank argues that "The implications of [Pound's definition] should be noted: an image is defined not as a pictorial reproduction but as a unification of disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time" (11). *The Idea of Spatial Form*, then, is an effort to locate spatial form, usually found in the plastic arts, in Modernist literature. Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoön* is the work Frank builds on in his study:

Form in the plastic arts, according to Lessing, is necessarily spatial because the visible aspects of objects can best be presented juxtaposed in an instant of time. Literature, on the other hand, makes use of language, composed of a succession of words proceeding through time; and it follows that literary form, to harmonize with the essential quality of its medium, must be based primarily on some form of narrative sequence. (7-8)

The purpose of Frank's study "is to apply Lessing's method to modern literature—to trace the evolution of form in modern poetry and, more particularly, in the novel" (10). My purpose is to extend Frank's theory of time and space to include the elements of interiority and consciousness,

elements that in addition to creating an organic unity are critical to achieving spatial form in literature and architecture.

Interiority and consciousness are also vital elements in Reader Response theory. Capturing that instant of time depends not only on what Frank sees as a spatial phenomenon, but also depends just as much on the reader. Fish remarks, “In 1970 I was asking the question ‘Is the reader or the text the source of meaning?’” (1); James and Woolf answer this question with a definitive answer—both the reader and the text, in fact, are critical to meaning, and while Frank concentrates on the Modernist writer’s ability to create spatiality in the text that results in a freezing of the moment, I argue that the reader cannot in any way experience spatial form in literature without actively engaging with the text. Fish further explains the reader’s involvement:

I challenged the self-sufficiency of the text by pointing out that its (apparently) spatial form belied the temporal dimension in which its meanings were actualized, and I argued that it was the developing shape of that actualization, rather than the static shape of the printed page, that should be the object of critical description. In short, I substituted the structure of the reader’s experience for the formal structures of the text on the grounds that while the latter were the more visible, they acquired significance only in the context of the former. If meaning is embedded in the text, the reader’s responsibilities are limited to the job of getting it out. (2)

James and Woolf use the text as a tool for the reader; by delving into the consciousness of the characters, thereby drawing the reader into the text, the “temporal dimension” is suspended. Frank explains that T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is “a structure [that depends] on the perception of relationships between disconnected word groups” (14). In order for the poem to be

“apprehended as a unity” (15), the “word-groups must be juxtaposed with one another and perceived simultaneously. Only when this is done can they be adequately grasped; for, while they follow one another in time, their meaning does not depend on this temporal relationship” (14). For any kind of meaning to occur, the reader must “get it out” as Fish declares.

James and Woolf both break from what Lessing sees as narrative sequence, and Wright’s designs, though it may seem easier to achieve spatial form in architecture, also break from what can be labeled “sequenced structures.” By this phrase, I refer to the regurgitation of old, European design, specifically during the Victorian period, which had become predictable and “superficial” (Ferebee 25). So, just as James and Woolf created new ways of seeing and thinking in the novel, Wright was just as innovative in the architectural world. Additionally, Fish’s ideas work equally well with Wright’s spatial designs. Wright’s exteriors and interiors require active participation from the dweller in order to freeze the moment in a home, just as in a novel. You must move into the house from one of Wright’s hidden entranceways, travel up the stairs, and emerge into the openness of the living area. Once faced with Wright’s open floor plan design, the dweller is frozen in a moment of time. The tension between the fixed image of the text or the house with the active participation of the reader is constant throughout my study of literature. Similarly, Fish admits: “I was moving in two (incompatible) directions at once” (8); Frank does the same when he reads Modernist texts and concentrates on the connection between reader, text, and spatial form. Wright, like James, Woolf, and Frank, also embodies that tension; without it, his organic, architectural creations would simply have no meaning for the dweller; the space would indeed be just a formless, meaningless abyss.

Frank, in his study of spatial form, does not use James or Woolf as models for his critique of Lessing’s theory. Instead, he chooses other Modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce,

and Djuna Barnes, whose poetry and novels reflect the writers' intentions for "the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (10). The four novels I have chosen are equally, if not more apt, studies of spatial form: James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). While James and Woolf certainly provide enough material to study in relation to spatial form, I will utilize Frank's theory to connect the two writers to Frank Lloyd Wright and his work between the years 1893—1949. The connection between literature and architecture is an important interdisciplinary journey that weaves the intellects of writers such as James and Woolf with the intellect of an architect like Wright. And while similarities certainly exist between the structure of the novel and the structure of a house, focusing on the reader's and the dweller's experiences and tying them together is an approach that has not been explored, especially in spatial terms.

Organic unity in modern poetry is further explained by Frank as a suspension of "the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity" (15). Frank's idea is easily applicable to the novels and houses I will study. For example, in Wright's organic architecture, his "structure is built according to nature's principles: harmonious in all its parts and with the environment, it expresses and unifies all the factors calling it into being—site, materials, client needs and architect's philosophy, construction methods, its culture, and the nature of the problem" (Twombly 319). Lyndall Gordon discusses Woolf's prose in *To the Lighthouse*, particularly "Mr. Ramsay's imperviousness to his child's longing to sail to the lighthouse and, at the same time, his attunement to his wife as they read together. The prose, oscillating between contradictory facts, may appear inconsistent to some readers, but it is a strenuous effort to contain the whole truth" (81-82). Additionally, William

James's ways of thinking about the brain and individual consciousness and unconsciousness played a crucial part in the development of character in Henry James's work, specifically his later novels, and Freud's explorations into dreams and unconsciousness certainly affected Woolf's explorations with time and memory. As obvious as these influences are in Modernist literature, Freudian influences are remarkably prominent in Wright's designs, especially his homes. Wright designed his interiors as spaces for the dweller to reflect on and bond with the natural surroundings; his obsession with organic simplicity parallels Freud's self-analysis techniques. Understanding the human unconscious was a quest for simplicity and a desire to create a more unified self. Capturing the present moment is no easy task in architecture, but Wright is successful not only with his use of spatial organization of rooms, but also with everything from his exterior building materials to the light fixtures and furnishings of the interior.

*Principles of Psychology* dissected nineteenth century views about physiology and the workings of the brain, and I argue that William James's ideas on something so precise as the cells and fibers of the brain affected ideas of how we perceive space. Wright's comment on "the enclosed space within" can be studied with logical reference to James's revelations about the psychological workings of the mind: "Where fibres are sent off they soon divide into untraceable ramifications; and nowhere do we see a simple coarse anatomical connection, like a line on the blackboard, between two cells" (53). The brain does not function as a simple linear machine; likewise, interior space in a Wright house is not relegated to four walls, a ceiling, and a floor. The reality of the building, like the reality of the mind is located within. Wright was determined to "change traditional cut-up interiors" (Maddex 53). Wright felt that "boxes beside boxes or inside boxes, called rooms . . . cellular sequestration that implied ancestors familiar



with penal institutions,” (qtd. In Maddex 53) was the mindset of nineteenth century architecture. Breaking completely with small Victorian hideaway spaces, Wright “except in sleeping areas, . . . eliminated doors and partitions, molding continuous space freed by the removal of posts, columns, corners, and thresholds. As spaces began to unfold gently, boring right angles were banished from Wright’s vocabulary” (53).

Just as Wright realized that interiority in buildings relied on what I argue is a new way of looking at the consciousness of self, so Henry James and Virginia Woolf also knew that the reality of the novel is located within the consciousness of the characters. The comfortable linearity of the Victorian novel became, in the writings of James and Woolf, “an interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area” (Frank 17). But only a change in thought—change produced by such thinkers as Freud and William James—could open the door to the unique spatial experiences in the novel and the home. Freud’s psychoanalytic experiments are obviously well documented, and I do not propose to present new or revelatory thought on his work; however, what has not been explored is any real connection between Freud’s influence on the individual self and that connection with architecture and literature, specifically focusing on the reader and the dweller’s spatial experiences. Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900, so whether Henry James read the work before the publication of his late novels is unknown, but certainly James was intellectually connected to several artists of the period and undoubtedly was somewhat familiar with Freud. Woolf, on the other hand, was extremely familiar with Freud, having decided to re-evaluate her feelings towards her father after beginning to read Freud in 1939. Freudian influence is prominent, however, even before Woolf’s actual reading of his work. *To the Lighthouse* was written, Woolf says, about her mother and helped to “[rub] out a good deal of the force of my mother’s memory” (*Moments of Being* 108). Woolf’s

exploration of the Ramsay family would simply be another linear tale of an eccentric group of people were it not for the extraordinary use of consciousness techniques to analyze, so to speak, the characters in terms of space and time.

Henry James, heavily influenced by his older brother William, is of course no stranger to consciousness technique and has been termed by many critics over the years as “the Master.” T.S. Eliot once wrote that “[Henry] James did not provide us with ‘ideas’, but with another world of thought and feeling” (qtd. in Krook 2). While James, in particular, has been studied in architectural metaphors, no real link has been established between James’s use of interiority and Wright’s focus on a building’s interior—its “enclosed space within.” Interiority, for James, meant producing for the reader a connection with the character’s consciousness. “James,” Terry Heller observes, “tended to select a consciousness finer than most readers have, yet to make it so clear to the imagination that for a moment the reader seems indeed to possess just such a mind” (7). Therefore, interiority for both James and Wright means a unity between reader and character and between house and dweller. I argue that interiority is also what Fish is defining when he claims that the reader determines the meaning of the text based on individual interpretive communities. Without James’s tendency to “select a consciousness” that becomes, in fact, the reader’s consciousness, the reader would have no motivation to actively engage the text. Spatial form would become impossible in literature, and certainly Frank, a member of the Modernist interpretive community, would not read his chosen texts in the same way. Woolf, an avid admirer of James, also sought through interiority and consciousness a way to find that enclosed space within. Woolf, like Wright, was determined to create a new way of looking at space; her experiments with time and memory coincide with Wright’s desire to “design a house from the inside out” (Maddex 52). Woolf builds on James’s psychological character studies by

creating more intricate connections between characters and developing a more defined center of consciousness, creating a unity, as Wright did, between exterior and interior.

Chapter one will focus on *The Turn of the Screw* and Wright's early architecture, beginning with his first Prairie house, the 1893 Winslow House in River Forest, Illinois. *The Turn of the Screw* has often been described as a Gothic recreation of the classic ghost story. Yet, James achieves much more than a simple Gothic tale; his early experimentation of blending interior and exterior is evident in several scenes, and his positioning of characters is almost identical to Wright's early idea of the experience of the dweller. For example, during one of the ghost sightings, the governess is standing inside the dining room of the house when she sees the apparition facing her, standing outside the dining room window: "The afternoon light still lingered, and it enabled me, on crossing the threshold, not only to recognize, on a chair near the wide window, then closed, the articles I wanted, but to become aware of a person on the other side of the window and looking straight in" (James 28). External to the governess's position are the afternoon light and the ghost, yet from the moment she sees the figure, James freezes the moment, creating a spatial experience. "I call it time, but how long was it?" the governess asks (29). The reader is transported into the consciousness of the governess, immersed in this one brief moment of the novel, yet unable, like the governess, to pinpoint an exact time span.

The exterior characteristics of Wright's Winslow House—windows, horizontal banding, and overhanging roof all break from the ornamental extravagance of late-eighteenth-and-early-nineteenth-century-architecture, creating, as James does, the foundation for patterns of unity. Wright's blending of the land and the structure follow James's departure of the basic linearity of much of Victorian literature. In *The Turn of the Screw*, James begins, like Wright, to dissolve sequence and suspend time. Wright believed that a building should be "a companion to the

horizon” (Maddex 23); likewise, James believed in a continuity of consciousness, and the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* is a companion, so to speak, of all the other characters—connected to them by James’s use of spatial form, utilizing architectural tricks, such as the dining room ghost sighting, to illuminate the consciousness of the narrator.

The study continues in Chapter two with *The Wings of the Dove*, arguably James’s masterpiece of interiority. I will focus on three characters: Kate Croy, Merton Densher, and Milly Theale. The corresponding Wright work will continue with his Prairie Houses of Oak Park, Illinois; these suburban dwellings beginning with the Furbeck House built in 1897, began a remarkable creative boom for Wright. Like James with Kate, Densher, and Milly, Wright establishes characters in the form of central fireplaces, octagonal reception areas, hipped roofs, and “soaring, rectangular, double chimneys” (O’Gorman 104); all work to blend the interior and exterior. Milly has been described by several critics as the center of *Wings*; in this chapter I will observe Milly’s centrality in relation to Wright’s central hearth, connecting both techniques to Frank’s theory. For example, Frank discusses Joyce’s *Ulysses* and the challenge Joyce faced of “attaining [a] unified impact, the sense of simultaneous activity occurring in different places” (19). Frank goes on to explain that *Ulysses* is a series of fragmentations that eventually, for the reader, are unified. James and Wright, however, focus not on fragments, but on a stable central consciousness to create a “spatial apprehension” (21) of their work.

Chapter three establishes the connection between James and Woolf, and more importantly, the connection between Woolf and Wright’s late Prairie homes. The focus on interiority continues with Wright’s more complex, intricate, interior constructions with an emphasis on his obsession to create ultimate unity in the home. Woolf, likewise, in *To the Lighthouse* parallels Wright’s efforts to capture spatial form, using consciousness, and especially

time, to achieve her goal. Frank uses Proust to illustrate the importance of “the form of Time” (21) in achieving spatial form in literature; Proust called time a “form which usually remains invisible.” (21) Woolf brilliantly plays with time in *To the Lighthouse*, invoking Bergsonian ideas of memory and “real time” as opposed to “abstract time,” (22) but Woolf’s success in achieving spatial form revolves not around memory entirely, but rests in her ability to fuse that abstract time with real time. Lily Briscoe’s painting is a symbol of Mrs. Ramsay, arguably the center of the novel, but it is Lily’s navigation between time periods and Woolf’s ability to reveal the inner thoughts of both Mrs. Ramsay and Lily—that fusion of consciousness and time—that ultimately results in a freezing of the moment. Wright also sought to fuse time by eliminating interior walls and using “screens—see through walls” (Maddex 53) to create new ideas of space; consequently, the dweller of the Prairie House should also feel, as does the reader of *To the Lighthouse*, the unity of a specific moment in time.

Chapter four concludes with an ideal study in spatial form—*The Waves*, and ties in nicely with Wright’s early Usonian residences. Wright’s Usonian period (“Usonian” is an acronym for United States of North America), was a time when he strove to make his residences more simplistic, yet like *The Waves*, the effort to simplify actually seems to become more complex. Wright’s Lloyd Lewis home, built in 1939, is a horizontal structure built in the woodlands of Libertyville, Illinois. The house is comprised of two wings, one raised slightly higher than the other—on the surface, a seemingly simple design. This Usonian home represents what Thomas O’Gorman calls Wright’s “new, edgy domestic design,” and provides “a fuller understanding of the details of [Wright’s] style” (12). *The Waves* is comprised of six characters whose thoughts about each other and death seem to lay out a simple tale for the reader. But the simplistic surface of the late work of Woolf and Wright is deceiving, for underneath lies the complexity of Frank’s

theory. Spatial form is not a simple task; Woolf's effort in *The Waves* goes beyond James. Consciousness, time, space, and interiority are completely intertwined in Woolf's characters and in Wright's Usonian designs; the complexity of these abstract principles actually results in a remarkably simplistic end to linear thought.

My study is certainly not meant to be a psychoanalytic approach to James and Woolf—that would be too obvious and too predictable. I use Freud and William James only to emphasize the changing historical periods of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, specifically the shift in thought concerning space, time, consciousness, and interiority. Without mentioning such pioneers as William James and Sigmund Freud, Joseph Frank's theory would simply not make any sense. Spatial form in Modernist literature is indeed such a break from most of Victorian literature that it is a significant area to study and one that I argue is not relegated to literature only. Modern architecture is just as important to the study of spatial form. But where my study differs from previous connections between literature and architecture is in the specific literary techniques used by writers and transferring the same techniques used by James and Woolf to those used by Wright. The importance of my interdisciplinary work lies in the realization by the reader (Fish's "active" reader theory) that spatial form is a result of our thought processes and most reflects the way we view time. Frank says it best when he wraps up his own view of the importance of spatial form: "Time is no longer felt as an objective, casual progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods; now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out. And here we have a striking parallel with the plastic arts" (63). And here, we have, indeed, a striking parallel with literature and architecture.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### ***THE TURN OF THE SCREW AND WRIGHT'S EARLY PRAIRIE HOMES***

While Henry James had certainly experimented with consciousness in the novel by 1898, his short “ghost story” *The Turn of the Screw* produced, like none of his other works, numerous critical, psychological studies of the governess’s consciousness—is she mad and hallucinating, or are the ghosts real? More than one hundred years later, in fact, critical articles are still being written. For example, Ryan Poquette’s 2003 essay in *Novels for Students* is all about the governess and her state of mind and actually concludes with “the governess *is* cruel and likely mad” (3). No attention, however, has been paid to spatial form in James’s short novel, yet the beginnings of change from linear, Victorian form are present. And certainly a streamlined psychic study of the governess is fascinating and worthwhile; in fact, determining the governess’ state of mind throughout the story is beneficial. Without getting into her mind, the reader cannot appreciate James’s use of space; however, whether the governess is insane or not makes absolutely no difference. The presence of the ghosts, real or imaginary, is still implanted in the reader’s mind, and James’s use of the apparitions is naturally spatial either way. The speculation of the governess’ state of mind is a typical reaction to James; David Southward in his article “Flirtations in Early James” observes the following:

The rhetorical mode of James’s fiction, its ambiguity, delicacy, and indirection, as well as its concentration on bottomless depths of character—in short, the features that distinguish his modernist from his Victorian traits—are derived in large part from the courtship dialect of genteel Anglo-Americans, mainly women. (493)

Southward focuses on the domestic sphere in his article, but his observations on James's ambiguity and character are poignant and relate quite nicely to the governess and our perplexity about her state of mind.

And the ambiguity of James is exactly what makes *The Turn of the Screw* an ideal text to study in terms of Reader Response theory. Stanley Fish cautions against placing the value of the text over that of the reader: "The goal is to settle on a meaning, and the procedure involves first stepping back from the text, and then putting together or otherwise calculating the discrete units of significance it contains" (158). Fish goes on to observe that through this process of assuming the text is "self-sufficient—everything is in it" (158) comes a logical conclusion that "the reader's activities are at once ignored and devalued" (158). The reader must actively engage with the text to pull any meaning from James's focus on consciousness and interiority in the novel. And while my argument for spatial form in James's work relies on the text for portraying the spatiality of the scenes I will discuss, I also stress that the reader's engagement with the governess's consciousness is absolutely crucial to recognizing and experiencing spatial form in the novel. I agree with Fish when he explains the importance of the reader:

The reader's activities are at the center of attention, where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as *having* meaning. The meaning they have is a consequence of their not being empty; for they include the making and revising of assumptions, the rendering and regretting of judgments, the coming to and abandoning of conclusions, the giving and withdrawing of approval, the specifying of causes, the asking of questions, the supplying of answers, the solving of puzzles. (159)



By breaking up the linear sequencing of events in the story, James uses the spatiality of the text to bring the reader in—what better way to encourage the reader to question the mind of the governess—and also to freeze the reader in the present moment.

I would have to conclude that understanding William James's ideas on personal consciousness must have played a huge part in Henry's exploration of the governess. For example, when discussing the stream of thought, William observes, "The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousnesses, minds, selves, concrete particular I's and you's" (147). Naturally when we read a novel, we should identify somewhat with the characters, especially with a first person narrator like the governess. James's innovation in his novels goes further than simple identification; he fuses the consciousness of reader and character—there are no longer "I's" and "You's" but only one unified consciousness. Adré Marshall argues that in earlier novels, writers such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, and even Flaubert, represented consciousness "as speech minus the sound, a trend that could be traced back to Plato, who described thought as 'the talk which the soul . . . has with itself about any subject which it considers'" (22). James follows William James's description of consciousness—"the other mind stuff" (qtd. in Marshall 22). Our connection with the governess' thought is more than just Plato's "internal dialogue" (22) simplification; in addition, the presence of spatial form in *The Turn of the Screw* takes consciousness and above all, interiority, a step further than previous character exploration in the novel. Charles Dickens, for example, has great character description ("speech minus the sound"), but James has more than an internal dialogue; he has internal *thought* and *consciousness*, which brings the reader in with the character, not separated by physical descriptive language.

Frank Lloyd Wright's early experimentation in building design follows closely James's work in *The Turn of the Screw*; Wright worked change in slowly to an architecture that had become stagnant, repetitious, and predictable. Creating his own consciousness, Wright's early Prairie houses can, like James's novel, be studied in terms of spatial form. I argue that simply substituting reader with dweller and looking at Wright's architectural designs as characters transports the dweller into the same states of consciousness and spatial realizations that are evident in literature. Wright, like James, in working to change existing structures, is building houses to satisfy a particular community. Fish calls these "interpretive communities," and certainly the modernist period can be classified as a particular interpretive community. Before Wright became successful, his ideas depended on the willingness of the dweller to interact with the design of the home; therefore, the dweller, like the reader, must actively participate in the consciousness of the home. The dweller becomes the character and the home functions as the text. Fish says that the author and the reader are not independent of each other: "The structure of the reader's experience [is] to describe the reader's efforts at understanding, and to describe the reader's efforts at understanding is to describe his realization (in two senses) of an author's intention" (161). This circular notion, which Fish explains is a part of the interpretive community, is exactly what Wright achieves with his private residences. The dweller, in tune with the spatial continuities of Wright's designs, works to understand and realize the architect's intention. In the houses I will study, the dweller's spatial experience relies on the ability to realize Wright's success at blending exterior and interior to fuse the experience into a unified moment.

James was actually fascinated with architecture, and his thoughts on buildings mirror Wright's. J.A. Ward says "To James a building possesses life when its various parts fuse as to

express a single idea” (15); the early architecture of Wright correlates nicely with James’s idea of the singularity of a building. Hired as a young apprentice to established Chicago architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee, Wright, only twenty years old, found himself immersed in the popular Queen Anne style of design. “Large, sprawling, shingle-sided Queen Anne homes were the rage of the day, an architectural style from the historic past” (O’Gorman 33), but Wright could not see any singularity in this type of design. Bored with copycat ideas, Wright joined the firm of Adler and Sullivan less than a year later, and it was here that Wright initiated many of his early ideas for the Prairie house. Influenced greatly by Louis Sullivan, Wright helped work on many of Chicago’s office and recreational buildings, but it was in the private homes of Chicago’s elite that Wright began to take Sullivan’s ideas and branch out in a completely individual, creative endeavor.

As early as 1891, Wright, working with Sullivan, implemented some of the techniques used to create the single, frozen moment in time that Joseph Frank speaks of in *The Idea of Spatial Form*. Using “golden wheat-colored Roman bricks,” (O’Gorman 34) on the James Charnley House and placing “eight square windows set in groups of four [to] provide light to the basement area while establishing the façade with further geometric balance,” (37) Wright initiated his organic idea of merging the house with the land. The bricks are horizontal, running parallel with the land rather than against it, and the windows provide important external/internal blending; the ground level of the home blends with the line of the street, and the horizontal bricks continue the line up and around the entire house.

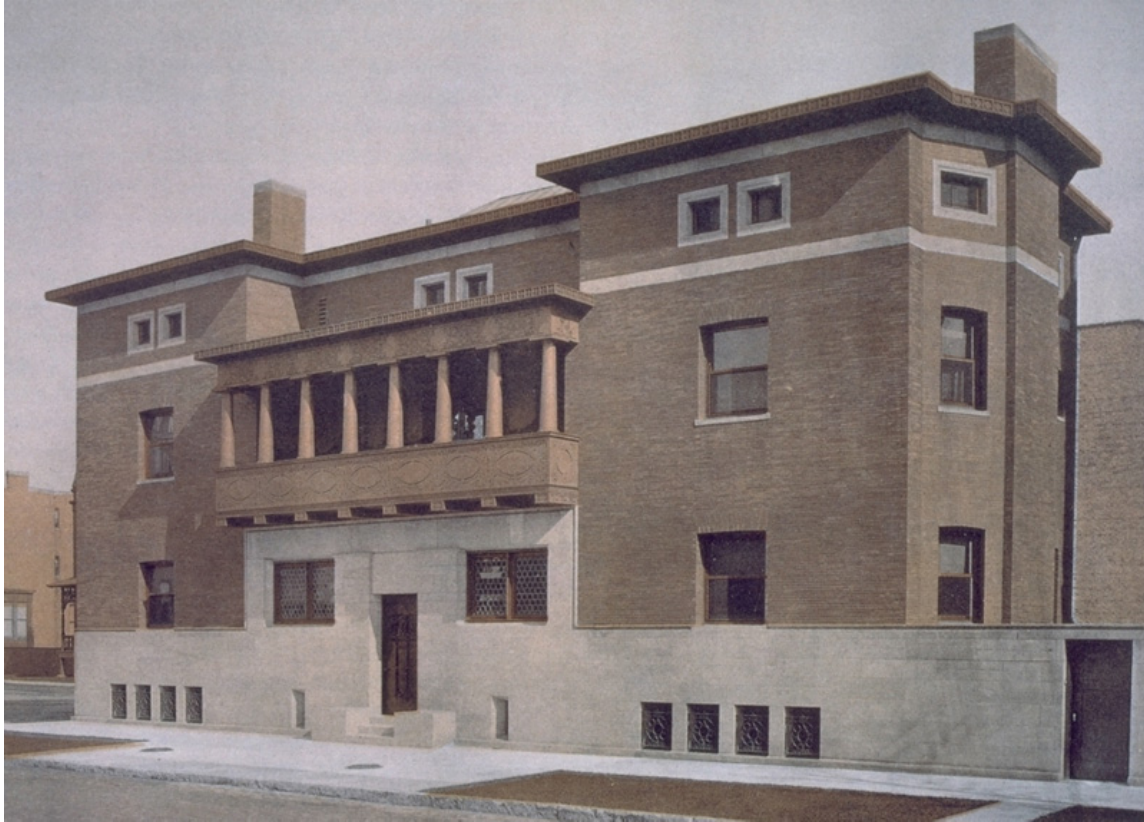


Figure 1: James Charnley Residence, S.009 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

The Charnley house can easily be viewed in terms of Ezra Pound's description of an image and leads naturally to Frank's application of spatial form: "An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (qtd. in Frank 11). Frank adds that "the instantaneous presentation of such complexes [the "unification of disparate ideas and emotions"] gives, as Pound says, 'that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth'" (11). While this freedom from time and space can be detected in the Charnley house, it is Wright's later, individual effort on the William Herman Winslow House (1893) that takes the entire elements of the structure and fuses "seemingly disparate experiences into an organic unity" (11).

Before discussing the Winslow House, a look at James's preliminary foray into spatial form should be examined. *The Turn of the Screw* is narrated by the governess; this first person technique does not, on the surface, tend to work as well for creating spatial form as the third person omniscient narrator. However, like Wright who used existing building materials and established architectural norms to change his idea of the home, James used the predictable, Victorian ghost story to his advantage. Ghost stories, more than any other kind-of story, come automatically with the element of fear, or at least the anticipation of fear, especially when told in the first person—the reader automatically is locked into the mind of the storyteller—for better or worse. But, even more of an advantage to the ghost story for James was that *The Turn of the Screw* “can be studied on three levels: ‘as a ghostly tale, pure and simple’; ‘as a deeply fascinating psychological ‘case’—which is what those interested in applying psychiatry have done’; and ‘as a projection of Henry James’s own haunted state” (Cranfill 35). The complexity of this simple little ghost story then is increased when we apply Frank’s theory.

“James has given the governess the freedom to be a fully rounded character with an unconscious to be expressed but not articulated in her narration,” (13) Terry Heller observes, and this is important in the scenes where spatial implications of the characters depend entirely on the interiority of the governess, whether the psychoanalysts want to label her thoughts as unconscious or not. In fact, if the reader chooses to believe the governess is indeed mad and is only imagining the ghosts, then James is “breaking up temporal sequence” (Frank 17) not only through the focus on consciousness, but also through the question of the reality or reliability of the governess’ thoughts. Frank says that Flaubert “dissolves sequence” in *Madame Bovary* “by cutting back and forth between the various levels of action in a slowly rising crescendo” (17). In the first scene I will study, James dissolves sequence, not by cutting back and forth between

different actions, but by cutting back and forth between reality and madness (if the governess' state of mind is questioned) and by positioning the governess and the ghost far away from each other, yet facing one another, frozen in an instant of the governess' mind.

The scene in question is the first sighting of Quint, the dead caretaker of Bly, the house where the governess has come to care for Flora and Miles, the Master's young niece and nephew. James begins the scene with the usual sequenced narrative—the governess is out for an afternoon walk, thinking to herself “it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet some one” (22). And then, of course, the expected happens, and the next step in the narrative is the sighting of someone, but James does not just describe the “person” the governess sees, and then move on to the next scene. Instead, just as Frank observed in Flaubert, the “spatialization of form in a novel” is illustrated by “[halting] the time-flow of the narrative; attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area” (17). James fixes the governess and the apparition within a particular space: “What arrested me on the spot—and with a shock much greater than any vision had allowed for—was the sense that my imagination had, in a flash, turned real. He did stand there!--but high up, beyond the lawn and at the very top of the tower” (James 22). Like Flaubert, James has set two levels of action by positioning the governess on the ground and Quint high above her in a tower, yet there is no action from Quint; we have only the consciousness of the governess to piece together the relationship between the two.

An interesting note on James's possible source for *The Turn of the Screw* is proposed by Thomas Cranfill and Robert Clark in *An Anatomy of The Turn of the Screw* (1971). Since psychoanalysis was later to have such an impact on the culture of the early twentieth century and Freud's studies of hysteria were to become quite influential on mental health care, James's influences, besides those of his brother, William, are worth looking into. Cranfill and Clark

propose that a book by Edmund Parish called *Hallucinations and Illusions* (1897) may have been a favorite read of James. Because of James's sister Alice's mental illness, James would have found Parish's observances of hysteria in women fascinating. Among Parish's findings, Cranfill and Clark relate, were the following: "the causes of hallucinations [in young women 15-20] are 1) morbid emotional states, 2) a state of mental or physical exhaustion, 3) vivid expectation, and 4) the hypnogenic tendency of prolonged reading" (37). James's governess is twenty years old, she is continually going without sleep, and she is emotionally distraught over the letter from Miles's headmaster, which gives no particular reason for the boy's dismissal from boarding school. Although hysteria was not a new concept, all of this mystery about mental processes, especially in women, is a result, again of the changing views on the human mind during the late nineteenth century. If it were not for this new examination of brain function, then it is reasonable to assume that James would not have placed as much emphasis on consciousness and interiority in his "ghost story."

As the governess describes her emotions while she and Quint share a "straight mutual stare," (24) James reminds the reader that the narrator is actually remembering the sighting after many years. Once again, time is disrupted and halted through the consciousness of the governess: "To me at least, making my statement here with a deliberation with which I have never made it, the whole feeling of the moment returns" (23). For the reader, then, the spatialization of form is reinforced; the governess even says, "The man who looked at me over the battlements was as definite as a picture in a frame" (23). These two parts of the narrative—the present and the memory of the past—are simultaneously fused and the moment is frozen, like a framed picture. For how long the moment lasts, the governess and the reader are unsure. The governess remarks:

We were confronted across our distance quite long enough for me to ask myself with intensity who then he was and to feel, as an effect of my inability to say, a wonder that in a few seconds more became intense. The great question, or one of these, is afterwards, I know, with regard to certain matters, the question of how long they have lasted. (23)

James then tries to have the governess describe the length of the present moment, but she finds it impossible. “Well, this matter of mine, think what you will of it, lasted while I caught at a dozen possibilities,” and “It lasted while I just bridled a little” and finally, “It lasted while this visitant . . . seemed to fix me, from his position, with just the question, just the scrutiny through the fading light, that his own presence provoked” (24). Along with breaking up temporal sequence, James has also blended the exterior “picture frame” of the moment with the interior thoughts of the governess.

Blending exterior and interior is also what Wright succeeds in doing with his first Prairie House, the Winslow House. Once again, as with the Charnley House, Wright used “thin, Roman brick on the exterior cladding instead of the more familiar Chicago common brick. This produced proportions with a more graceful horizontal line that soon became emblematic of the Prairie style” (O’Gorman 59). The windows, however, are decidedly larger than any Wright had designed before. Four “massive” (59) windows across the bottom floor and three smaller ones across the top floor reinforce the horizontal line that blends with the line of the ground. Also, the overhanging roof, another characteristic of the Prairie House, works in symmetry with the windows to blend the entire façade of the house with the land.





Figure 2: William Herman Winslow Residence, S.024 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Thomas O’Gorman observes that “The upward sweep of the symmetrical hipped roof and the generous overhang of the roof appear to complete the proportionality of the house’s horizontal character” (59). The horizontal line is important when looking at Wright’s work in spatial terms. While a house can resemble a sculpture, something that may be “necessarily spatial” according to Gotthold Lessing, Wright’s Prairie houses go beyond the static form of a sculpture or a painting; his early work is equated more aptly, I believe, with spatiality in literature, for the blending of a character’s thoughts, such as James’s governess, with the exterior frame of another character, is just what Wright perpetuates with his obsession of blending house and site. The organic similarities between architecture and literature are evident, especially when viewed through spatial categories.

Frank, discussing Marcel Proust’s *Le Temps Retrouvé*, makes an observation about Proust’s characters: “Rather than being submerged in the stream of time and intuiting a character progressively, in a continuous line of development, the reader is confronted with various snapshots of the characters ‘motionless in a moment of vision’ taken at different stages

in their lives” (26). Frank goes on to discuss how Proust grasps “both past and present simultaneously in a moment of what he called ‘pure time’” (26); however, Frank makes an important connection with time and space. “But ‘pure time,’” Franks says, “obviously, is not time at all—it is perception in a moment of time, that is to say, space” (26-27). The bricks, the windows, and the roof are all “snapshots” of Wright’s characters; likewise, the governess and the apparition are equally snapshots that “force the reader [or the dweller] to juxtapose disparate images spatially, in a moment of time, so that the experience of time’s passage is communicated directly to his sensibility” (27).

Wright, like James, increased his “snapshots of characters” as his career progressed. With the George Furbeck House (1897) Wright’s blending of exterior and interior began to develop beyond the relationship of house and site. While the Furbeck house was still in Wright’s experimental Prairie stage and does not reflect quite the horizontal picture of the Winslow house, there are important additions that bring Wright closer to interiority of design. For example, Wright designed “two substantial octagonal towers” that “frame the exterior façade of the house and influence the interior footprint of the house” (O’Gorman 104).



Figure 3: George Furbeck Residence S.043 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Inside the house, the reception area is also octagonal, “shaped by the form of the tower and containing a substantial fireplace” (105). The fireplace, or the hearth, becomes the center of the dwelling in Wright’s later Prairie homes—a unity that results from fusing several “units of meaning” (Frank 27).



Figure 4: George Furbeck Residence S.043: Living Room 1980s in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Wright was obsessed with light. His geometric designs on windows were created to interact with the shifting light of the day. One of the many houses Wright designed in Oak Park, Illinois is the Robert G. Emmond residence, which includes a dining room window that faces out into the back yard. Etched into the window is a geometrical framed design which appears as a frame within the frame of the window: “Seeing windows as screens filtering light, it became natural [for Wright] to etch them with geometric and stylized nature designs that stenciled patterns on the walls and floors inside. Strands of these translucent ribbons, framed between dark lintels and sills, made walls seem to disappear beneath their floating roofs above” (Maddex 36).



Figure 5: Robert G. Emmond Residence, S.015, View Through Dining Room Window in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Similarly, the governess's second sighting of Quint occurs through a dining room window, and her vision, James seems to be saying, is connected to the light falling into the room:

The day was grey enough, but the afternoon light still lingered, and it enabled me, on crossing the threshold, not only to recognize, on a chair near the wide window, then closed, the articles I wanted, but to become aware of a person on the other side of the window and looking straight in. One step into the room had sufficed; my vision was instantaneous; it was all there. (28)

Not only is this an excellent example of spatial form in literature, it is also an exact companion to Wright's use of window and light to blend exterior with interior. Standing inside the dining room of the Emmond house, the dweller can experience, as the governess does, that perfect unity with the exterior. While James achieves spatial form by again freezing the consciousness of the

governess, Wright equally achieves spatial form by consciously designing windows to create space that, depending on the time of day, can freeze the moment and suspend “pure time.”

The governess’ experience this time with Quint is described even more in terms of spatial form. The governess says, “He remained but a few seconds—long enough to convince me he also saw and recognized; but it was as if I had been looking at him for years and had known him always” (28). Like Wright’s octagonal towers, James is searching for a deeper connection with interiority and the exterior vision. As if to suspend the moment longer, the governess asks, “I call it time, but how long was it?” (29). *The Turn of the Screw* and Wright’s early houses ask just that question—how long is the moment, whether experienced in literature or in a building? “It was clear during the 1890s that Wright was uncomfortable with prevailing styles, disliked the general run of interior arrangements, and was disturbed by what he saw around him” (Twombly 61); change was needed, Wright believed, and James certainly succeeds in changing the idea of consciousness and interiority even in a tale that “on first reading, . . . seems to present itself as a thriller” (Heller 19). In the next chapter I will show that James, with *The Wings of the Dove*, and Wright, with the explosion of his Prairie houses in Oak Park, Illinois, both step up their efforts to create work that can be apprehended spatially in a moment of time and re-define the parameters of literature and architecture.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### ***THE WINGS OF THE DOVE* AND WRIGHT'S OAK PARK PRAIRIE HOMES**

Re-defining parameters meant, for Wright and James, using different building materials to achieve new structures in homes and novels. *The Wings of the Dove* has been placed in the rather narrow category of James's "late novels" but in terms of spatial form, *Wings* is exceptional. The structure of the novel is fairly straightforward—ten books with Book Five focusing on arguably the center character of the novel—Milly Theale. Deep within the simple structure and superficial love triangle of *Wings*, however, lie the materials James used to create new levels of interiority and consciousness. From the opening chapter of Book One, it is evident that James is no longer simply exploring the idea of interiority, as he did in *The Turn of the Screw*, but has provided the reader with the opportunity to enter deep into the consciousness of Kate Croy's mind. Stanley Fish, who places such responsibility on the reader to get meaning out of a text, has a point when he says that it is the "structure of the reader's experience" rather than the "formal structures of the text" (2) that supplies any meaning at all in the text. Because there is very little sequencing present in the reader's introduction to Kate, however, until the entrance of Kate's father after about four pages, the reader has an opportunity, I argue, *because* of James's structural positioning of Kate in the opening scene, to become frozen in Kate's consciousness. And using what James refers to in the *Preface to the New York Edition* as "solid blocks of wrought material," (9) Kate is just the "preliminary presentation" (9). Two other characters, Merton Densher and Milly, will form a solid foundation for spatial form in the novel.

Wright, equally, began to put together solid blocks of material in much different ways than previous architects had ever attempted. James A. Schmiechen in "The Victorians, the



Historians, and the Idea of Modernism” defends Victorian architecture, arguing that if viewed in its proper historical perspective, the “ugliness” (287) of the buildings and homes in pre-industrial Europe served a valid social and domestic purpose and was entirely “a genuine expression of society’s needs” (316). Schmiechen makes several interesting points about Victorian society and all of their urban problems, but his argument fails when faced with Wright’s own words about function and form. For example, Schmiechen argues that the “brick row house, the country house of the nouveau riche, the railroad station, the working-class pub and music hall, and overall, the Victorian reorganization of the city [are] successful answers to the spatial and sanitary problems of industrial society” (291). Yes, that is certainly true; however, Wright, when asked about his reputation as a Romanticist in the machine age, answers Schmiechen’s argument in the following way:

The proper use of the Machine should be to make life more beautiful, more livable. No, not necessarily easier and quicker just to feed this American voracity which we call speed. If speed and destruction plus sanitation are to be the function of machinery among us, the machine will destroy us and its present idolatry will eventually defeat our attempt at culture. (27)

Schmiechen argues that Victorian architecture should be looked at through nineteenth century eyes, not through the modernist twentieth century lens. Wright did, however, face similar urban design problems in Chicago—land size was dwindling significantly in his late building stage. Yet, he still managed to place aesthetic value over function; he molded the space he was given into something more beautiful and more livable. Whether viewed in nineteenth or twentieth century eyes, Victorian architecture was so drastically different, in form as well as function, from Wright’s organic vision. John Summerson observes, “It was around 1870 that the first great



revulsion against Victorian architecture began” (11). The period between 1840 and 1870 was a very active one, Summerson goes on to say, but among the critics of the time, the architecture was deemed a “failure” (17). Wright desired simply to change the way architects looked at space and to break away from the confusion and mingled styles of the past. With the Victorians, “we are faced with a unique and huge distortion of social and artistic relationships” (18), and certainly Wright attempted to bring together his artistic visions with practical social concerns. Wright’s and James’s innovations in the modernist age were indeed brought about by social conditions, just as Schmiechen reiterates about the Victorians—the difference lies in the focus on the self, once again due to changing views on brain function and consciousness.

With the William Adams House, designed by Wright and built in 1900, evidence of new and innovative materials prefaces Wright’s headlong plunge into the Prairie style. Moving beyond the blending of house and site, Wright concentrates on the porch. The Adams House is located in Chicago’s Beverly Hills neighborhood, “a country in the city community” (O’Gorman 114). The house is surrounded by foliage, and Wright used the country surroundings to design the porch.



Figure 6: William and Jessie M. Adams Residence, S.048 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

The porch can be viewed in the same way we view Kate in the beginning chapter of *Wings*: the porch works as “a connector between interior space and exterior space, rather than the usual Victorian utility of an outdoor room. Wright uses the porch to expand the unity of the structure to include its setting in nature” (116). Just like James’s “preliminary presentation” of Kate, the porch is a covered passageway that allows the dweller to hover in between nature and the front entranceway, rather than proceed step by step from the ground to the porch to the front door—in other words, the porch provides the opportunity for a continuous journey, rather than a clear linear progression.

These individual steps are what Frank refers to as “units of meaning.” (27) Commenting on the relationship between Proust and Impressionism, Frank observes:

The Impressionist painters juxtaposed pure tones on the canvas, instead of mixing them on the palette, in order to leave the blending of colors to the eye of the spectator. Similarly, Proust gives us what might be called pure views of his characters—views of them ‘motionless in a moment of vision’ in various phases of their lives—and allows the sensibility of the reader to fuse these views into a unity. Each view must be apprehended by the reader as a unit; and Proust’s purpose is achieved only when these units of meaning are referred to each other reflexively in a moment of time. (27-28)

The reader of the opening scene of *Wings* is taken, like Wright’s dweller, through steps or units of meaning as Kate stands in her father’s house waiting for him to “come in.” James shows us a woman standing, looking at herself “in the glass over the mantel,” staring at “the sallow prints on the walls and at the lonely magazine” (21) on the table. Kate moves out onto the balcony and back into the room “from time to time” suggesting not just a few minutes, yet probably not a few hours either. The amount of time Kate waits is unclear, yet, like Proust, the reader is given a chance to fuse these units of Kate’s actions into a unity experienced equally by the dweller of Wright’s front porch: “To feel the street, to feel the room, to feel the table-cloth and the centre-piece and the lamp, gave her a small salutary sense of neither shirking nor lying. This whole vision was the worst thing yet—as including in particular the interview to which she had braced herself” (21). We are not proceeding step by step with Kate from the various spots in the room outside to the balcony in a sequence of events that have no relationship to each other. Like Wright’s porch, James places us inside Kate’s consciousness first—we are suspended with her as she moves from one place to another. Kate’s thoughts as she moves from inside to outside

enable the reader to hover in between the two spaces, as the dweller hovers on the porch, waiting to enter the house.

This continuity of suspension with Kate and Wright's porch tie in nicely with William James's observances on the continuity of personal consciousness: "I can only define 'continuous' as that which is without breach, crack, or division," William says. He then lists two propositions concerning the continual nature of consciousness: "1. That even where there is a time-gap the consciousness after it feels as if it belonged together with the consciousness before it, as another part of the same self; 2. That the changes from one moment to another in the quality of the consciousness are never absolutely abrupt" (154). I find William's use of the word "abrupt" to be a perfect example of the difference in sequenced writing or boxed in architecture. Henry James and Wright both worked so obviously to avoid the abruptness of prose and architecture, and certainly these changing ideas about consciousness that William James brings up are aptly suited to both artists and their ultimate visions.

J.A. Ward observes that "James habitually discussed the relationships between parts of his novels in spatial rather than chronological terms, as when he spoke of one part 'lighting' another or of the 'aspects' of a situation" (31). Indeed, James "lights" upon Kate at the entranceway into his novel; James dissolves sequence by freezing or "lighting" Kate's image in the mirror. As we hover on James's porch, Kate's thoughts do not jump out at the reader, but gradually the reader is drawn in to Kate's interior thoughts as Kate, in turn, moves toward her position in front of the mirror. Similarly, "front doors of Wright houses do not usually call out to visitors, who are gently taken in hand on a little voyage of discovery. Tucked under a broad overhanging roof or a cantilevered balcony, the entrance beckons from the shadows" (Maddex

31). As we take the voyage into *Wings*, James's vision, like Wright's porches and entranceways, will beckon the reader into a unified spatial experience.

After moving with Kate from inside to outside and back inside again, James fixes Kate in front of the mirror: "She stared into the tarnished glass too hard indeed to be staring at her beauty alone" (22). Unlike *The Turn of the Screw*, the reader is faced with only one character now—Kate—facing herself in the mirror rather than a ghostly apparition outside the dining room window. And, indeed, James has Kate stare into the glass not just to see her reflection, but to draw the reader into her thoughts. James does give us a description of Kate's beauty, however, but does not stop there:

She was dressed altogether in black, which gave an even tone, by contrast, to her clear face and made her hair more harmoniously dark. Outside, on the balcony, her eyes showed as blue; within, at the mirror, they showed almost as black. She was handsome, but the degree of it was not sustained by items and aids; a circumstance moreover playing its part at almost any time in the impressions she produced. The impression was one that remained, but as regards the sources of it no sum in addition would have made up the total. She had stature without height, grace without motion, presence without mass. (22)

Following Kate's physical description, a description that is, in fact, much more than just a superficial listing of Kate's attributes, James brings the reader back into Kate's consciousness: "There was a minute during which, though her eyes were fixed, she quite visibly lost herself in the thought of the way she might still pull things round had she only been a man" (23). Drawn back into the character's thoughts, the reader, like the person entering a Wright home, freezes, instead of progressing to the next sentence or paragraph of description.

James's blending of interior and exterior in this scene is an example of Fish's tension between the formalist aspects of studying a text and the placing of all responsibility on the reader to pull meaning from the work. Spatial form, I argue, also works within the two polarities. By encouraging the reader to lose herself in the consciousness of a character like Kate Croy, James does count on the reader to be "endowed with purposes and concerns" (Fish 8) to determine "what counts as the facts to be observed" (8) in the text. But it is also the spatial characteristics of the scene that bring the reader into the moment. So this tension that Fish is trying to work out with formalist criticism is actually not a tension at all when looked at in terms of spatial form—the text, the reader, and the author all work together to capture the present moment.

Breaking from the traditional Victorian novel's reliance on description was, of course, just one of the breakthroughs attributed to the modernists, and certainly James's opening image of Kate is an excellent example of what Pound describes as "that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits" (qtd. in Frank 11). Once again, we can ask how long Kate "waits" or even stands in front of the mirror, but there is no way to pinpoint an exact time. The reader experiences a "freedom" from the old Victorian linearity, a malleable difference in thought. Wright accomplishes the same thing when he begins to use new building materials. For example, the Frank Thomas House built in 1901 was the beginning of Wright's headlong dive into the Prairie style of thought, "his first fully mature Prairie house" (O'Gorman 122).



Figure 7: Frank Wright Thomas Residence, The Harem S.067 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Still defining his idea of exteriors, Wright decided to use “stucco, or composite plaster” (124) on the Thomas house. “This element became an important feature of his Prairie style. Plaster provided him with a design flexibility not found in exterior wood cladding. With stucco, he was able to achieve just the right geometric contouring on a house of frame design” (124).

Contouring and molding the shape of the house, the shape of the entranceway parallels James’s positioning of Kate in front of her mirror.





Figure 8: Frank Wright Thomas Residence, The Harem, S.067: Detail At Entry Porch in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

The use of a flexible material like plaster allows Wright to create spaces that are not fixed. Wood frames, on the other hand, or wood cladding, do not particularly allow the builder to mold the shape of the structure.

So, in order to create a unified work, the materials, whether those used to construct a house or a novel, must be pliable. They must “melt into each other” as William James says about the stream of consciousness (161). Frank calls Pound’s *Cantos* a “radical transformation . . . in aesthetic structure” (12) compared to his earlier *Mauberland*; Pound employs what R. P. Blackmur calls a “deliberate disconnectedness”:

This deliberate disconnectedness, this art of a thing continually alluding to itself, continually breaking off short, is the method by which the *Cantos* tie themselves together. So soon as the reader’s mind is concerted with the material of the poem,



Mr. Pound deliberately disconcerts it, either by introducing fresh and disjunct material or by reverting to old and, apparently equally disjunct material. (14)

Interestingly, William James discusses the interruptions the brain must deal with and determines that the interruptions, or the disconcertedness as Pound would describe it, do not interfere with the stream of consciousness:

A silence may be broken by a thunder-clap, and we may be so stunned and confused for a moment by the shock as to give no instant account to ourselves of what has happened. But that very confusion is a mental state, and a state that passes us straight over from the silence to the sound. The transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the *thought* than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the *consciousness* as much as the joint is a part of the *bamboo*. (156)

Frank mentions Pound's *Cantos* as an important step toward spatial form in Modern Poetry. So Wright's deliberate use of plaster and stucco on a frame house instead of the more traditional wood is important and necessary to creating a suspension of time, avoiding any kind of "break in the wood," just as James suspends time with Kate's introduction. While we don't usually think of literature in terms of geometric structure, certainly we can look at James's design of Kate's consciousness in the same light as Wright's entranceway design of the Thomas House; both suspend time by disconcerting the reader and the dweller, just as Pound did. Consciousness, like Wright's malleable materials, is a geometric design of sorts. Dorothea Krook attributes consciousness in James's characters, particularly Kate Croy, as "their inordinate capacity for *being* and *seeing*: for life, that is, and for consciousness" (16).

“Being and seeing” is an interesting way to look at Wright’s exteriors, particularly his entranceways. The F.B. Henderson house (1901) continues Wright’s deliberate quest to design different ways of accessibility to the home. Paralleling James’s quest to bring the reader into the consciousness of Kate, Wright seems to be doing the exact same thing as the dweller actually enters the house. The Henderson house takes another step toward the merging of outside and inside with its main entrance: “Among the more remarkable design characteristics is the curious main entryway in which the proportions of the over heightened lower-porch columns dwarf human scale, rising to enfold everyone as they enter” (O’Gorman 132).



Figure 9: F.B. Henderson Residence, S.057 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

This use of space is integral in terms of achieving spatial form—if there is no connection with the exterior before entering the interior, then the dweller of a Wright home is not going to appreciate the space inside the home. Just as the reader of James cannot help but feel herself continually pulled from the physical presence of Kate before the mirror (“the girl’s repeated pause”) (22) to the intricacies of Kate’s consciousness, the dweller of the Henderson house also cannot help but feel the continuity of the exterior design of the overhanging, horizontal roof with the first step into the home.

The blending of exterior and interior in both Wright and James mirrors what Frank refers to as “the interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area” (17). Frank is referring to Flaubert’s country fair scene in *Madame Bovary*. Easily, however, Wright’s entrances fall into the elements of spatial form that Frank sees in the novel. The walk from the street to the door of the home should never involve a separation of steps. As I said above, this should be a continuous journey, within a set time and place, yet that interplay must exist for any fixed moment in time to occur; Wright accomplishes this just as James does. We can see in the scene with Milly and Lord Mark just how James works that interplay between character, consciousness and space. The scene in question is the “wonderful Bronzino” (137) that Lord Mark shows to Milly.

Similar to the opening scene of Kate looking in the mirror, Milly gazes at the painting and we are drawn deep into her consciousness. Before Milly arrives at the painting, however, she is taken slowly through the house by Lord Mark. This journey toward the painting is not entirely linear; in fact, it has the unusual result of achieving spatialization without immobilizing the character’s movements. For example, James writes: “She got with her companion into the house; they brushed, beneficently, past all their accidents. The Bronzino was, it appeared, deep within, and the long afternoon light lingered for them on patches of old colour and waylaid them, as they went, in nooks and opening vistas” (138). James’s use of the words “waylaid” and “lingered” and “brushed” frame the walking scene in an entirely new way than the standard linearity of movement in the typical Victorian novel.

These words or units of meaning mingle with the reader and propose a halting, yet also a continuity, of time. Milly and Lord Mark’s slow walk through the house can be viewed in relation to Wright’s idea about the outside of a house. Yes, Milly and Lord Mark are within the

house, but Milly's actual experience standing in front of the painting, which I will discuss shortly, is the central interiority of James's story. Wright believed that the outside of the house "was all there, chiefly because of what happened *inside*" (Twombly 67). Here is where I take Frank's theory just a step further: it is absolutely critical to establish, whether in the novel or in the structure of a house, that connection between outside and inside. Interiority, despite its dependence on the consciousness of the character, must be set up, so to speak, by the author. James does just this with the Bronzino scene; Milly travels *outside* not only the painting itself, but also Lord Mark's consciousness. Then James slowly draws us into Milly's mind; at the same time, we are drawn somewhat into the consciousness of Lord Mark:

It was all the while for Milly as if Lord Mark had really had something other than this spoken pretext in view; as if there were something he wanted to say to her and were only—consciously yet not awkwardly, just delicately—hanging fire. At the same time it was as if the thing had practically been said by the moment they came in sight of the picture." (138-39)

The "thing to be said" is Milly's idea that Lord Mark, along with many other characters in the story, wants to take care of Milly, who is dying. James, though, does not have Lord Mark just come out and say this—it is only through Milly's consciousness that we learn his thoughts.

As we near the discussion of the spatialization of the Bronzino scene, it is pertinent to look at Wright's similar vision of space and consciousness. For example, Wright changed the way walls were viewed in architecture. Maddex notes that "Wright started by figuratively tearing down walls, tossing out the concept of a wall as the side of a box in which holes are punched. Once he saw walls not as an impediment to light and air but as the enclosure of space, he began to bring them 'towards the function of a screen'" (34-35). In Wright's Prairie style

homes, he began to experiment with ways to bring his vision of walls as screens to fruition. The Thomas House is an excellent example of Wright's movement toward a complete merging of the outside space with the inside space. Just as James creates a moving wall, so to speak, with Milly and Lord Mark's journey to the Bronzino, Wright designed the windows of the Thomas House to destroy the stale idea of a house with "four straight walls with holes cut out for windows and doors" (34). Expanding considerably on his geometric window etchings from the earlier dining room window of the Emmond residence, Wright actually turns the numerous windows of the Thomas House into works of art. Using the warm hues of the Prairie—gold, brown, orange—Wright created stained glass that captured the sun's rays and projected the image onto the floor inside the home. Not only did he concentrate on the patterns of the stained glass, but he also grouped several windows together and built the walls to "rise up only to a high sill level, where windows [are] grouped together for maximum impact" (34). The maximum impact is exactly what James accomplishes in *Wings*; the screen that Wright creates is equal to the screen that James creates between Milly's consciousness and the reader's. No solidity obstructs the reader from Milly's thoughts. Even the rigidity of the physicality of the text is dissolved into a screen; like the sun's rays piercing the patterns of stained glass, the reader is projected through the space of the scene by James's explorations into Milly's thoughts.

So like the patterns of the stained glass immobilized on the floor of the home, Milly's ultimate stop in front of the painting freezes the moment, a moment that has indeed been frozen from the start of the walk through the house. Proust views time and "minute" time changes as "imperceptible" (qtd. in Frank 25). Frank quotes Proust because the idea of time is, of course, quite crucial to achieving spatial form. It is worth looking closely at this juxtaposition of time and character in the novel. Proust says:

Other people never cease to change places in relation to ourselves. In the imperceptible, but eternal march of the world, we regard them as motionless in a moment of vision, too short for us to perceive the motion that is sweeping them on. But we have only to select in our memory two pictures taken of them at different moments, close enough together however for them not to have altered in themselves—perceptibly, that is to say—and the difference between the two pictures is a measure of the displacement that they have undergone in relation to us. (qtd. in Frank 25)

Frank goes on to add, “By comparing these two images in a moment of time, the passage of time can be experienced concretely through the impact of its visible effects on the sensibility” (25). Milly’s ultimate stop in front of the Bronzino is only relevant in terms of spatial form to the preceding “picture” that the reader has of her making her way through the house with Lord Mark. Once again, James plays with the passage of time—just how long does it take for Milly to reach the room where the painting waits? And how long does she stand motionless in front of the painting? Other characters come and go around Milly and yet Milly herself seems suspended in her own little space, and the reader, subsequently, becomes suspended with her.

The descent into the interior of the house culminating with Milly’s stare into her “likeness” becomes a critical, spatial moment that will define Milly’s central interiority. This centrality is James’s huge leap in the use of space and consciousness from the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. Similarly, as we move from Wright’s doors and windows into the interior design of his houses, his central hearth and open spaces will create the same experience of spatial form that the reader experiences with Milly. Before Milly has become aware of Kate and

Densher's plot to inherit her wealth, James imposes a unified knowledge on his heroine—a knowledge that the future is not going to hold for her any real chance at living:

She found herself, for the first moment, looking at the mysterious portrait through tears. The lady in question, at all events, with her slightly Michael-angel-esque squareness, her eyes of other days, her full lips, her long neck, her recorded jewels, her brocaded and wasted reds, was a very great personage—only unaccompanied by a joy. And she was dead, dead, dead. Milly recognized her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her. “I shall never be better than this.” (139)

This crucial scene defines, arguably, the central meaning of *Wings*, for soon Milly's fatal illness will launch the fateful plot, and the Bronzino portrait will, as Charles R. Anderson notes, “acquire yet another meaning: that Milly's ultimate beauty only emerges at her death” (188). The introduction by James to a type of general, dramatic character—Milly, for example—is the “central consciousness” around which other characters can revolve or flow. James says in his *Preface to The Wings of the Dove*, “The opening of Book Fourth [is] where all the offered life centres, to intensity, in the disclosure of Milly's single throbbing consciousness, but where for a due rendering, everything has to be brought to a head” (12). Indeed, the characters surrounding Milly in her debut at Lancaster Gate—Kate, Densher, Lord Mark, to name but a few—will suddenly move to the parameters of the novel, though eventually, as James says, they will never disconnect with the central character.

In fact, in the final scene I will study in *Wings*, Milly is seen only through the consciousness of Densher, yet she seems as present as when she studies the Bronzino. Merton Densher, manipulated brilliantly by Kate, finds himself alone in Venice, waiting to see Milly and

hoping to launch the plot to marry Milly and take her money. Yet, James does not dwell on this simple plot; instead he gives us a clear path to Milly's consciousness, while at the same exact time illuminating Densher's thoughts and merging the two characters just as Wright merges the characters of sunlight, windows and walls. Milly's recognition that she "will never be better than this," is not only a wonderful example of spatial form—that halting of "the time-flow of the narrative" (Frank 17)—but is also a sense of release and freedom for the reader; after Milly's realization of Densher's betrayal, her symbolic turning of "her face to the wall," (James 334) and her death, the reader is propelled back to her words in front of the portrait, and the parts of Milly's experiences are made into a central, unified whole: "To James a novel or tale succeeds when it possesses intensity, coherence and completeness. Coherence is total unity—the demonstration of the relevance of every part of the work to every other part" (Ward 6). Anderson adds "Intricate relations are, as the author himself said, those of a circumference to a center, the heroine becoming gradually enclosed in the 'circumvallations' of their plot" (195).

Although it is doubtful that James knew of Freud's work in progress: *The Interpretation of Dreams* during his work on *The Wings of the Dove*, we can speculate that through William James, Henry may have discussed some of Freud's ideas about the unconscious and what happens when we dream. Milly, for example, is a character who seems to be walking around in her own dream and subsequently the reader is carried along with her. James's success at creating spatial form in the Bronzino scene may owe quite a lot to the changing ideas about the unconscious and the emergence of self-analysis, which almost certainly James would have been familiar with. Freud's exhausting study and analysis of his own dreams brought him to several conclusions, whether plausible or not by today's analytical standards. But the act of self-analysis works very well with Milly. As she stands in front of the painting and sees herself as "dead,



dead, dead” she is doing some self-analyzing of her own. If dreams are wish fulfillments, as Freud concluded, then certainly James follows through on Milly’s dreamlike state in front of the painting. Milly’s death, again however, does not remove her consciousness from the novel—she simply lives on in Densher’s and, of course, the reader’s. James, it could be argued, creates an elongated spatial realization from the time of Milly’s “dream revelation” in front of the Bronzino until the final scene where Kate is fixed once again waiting for Densher’s answer and frozen, as she was in the first scene, waiting for her fate.

In Book Ninth, we experience Densher’s thoughts as he leaves his room in Venice to visit Milly in her palace. The coherence of the novel, I believe, is manifested in this scene. James brings Densher from his room to the palace so smoothly that the blending of the exterior idea of walking to a destination to the subtle interiority of Densher’s consciousness is effortless and timeless. This is exactly what Frank means when he says that “Every reader soon notices that Proust does not follow any of his characters continuously through the whole course of his novel. Instead, they appear and reappear in various stages of their lives” (26). The “intricate relations” as Anderson mentioned, between Densher, Kate, and Milly are wonderfully brought together when the narrator says:

What he liked best was, in any case, to know *why* things were as he felt them; and he knew it pretty well, in this case, ten days after the retreat of his other friends. He then fairly perceived that—even putting their purity of motive at its highest—it was neither Kate nor he who made his strange relation to Milly, who made her own, so far as it might be, innocent; it was neither of them who practically purged it—if practically purged it was. Milly herself did everything—so far at least as he was concerned—Milly herself, and Milly’s house, and Milly’s hospitality, and

Milly's manner, and Milly's character, and, perhaps still more than anything else, Milly's imagination. (317).

James has succeeded in creating three characters who appear and reappear throughout the novel, yet Milly's disappearance toward the end of the novel is actually the realization of spatial form above and beyond Proust or any of the other authors that Frank uses to examine spatial form. When James writes that "Milly herself did everything," he is making a statement just as Wright is. James is dissolving that stagnant novel with cut-outs for characters; like Wright's numerous rows of windows that when "lighted at night, the [walls seem] to vanish, leaving the roofs to float ethereally above," (Maddex 34). Milly's consciousness also floats above the thoughts of Densher, Kate, and all the other characters.

Wright's plan to "design a house from the inside out," (Maddex 52) and to blend the exterior with the interior is often described as organic architecture, "which is, simply put, an intrinsic, natural, living architecture based on ideas" (Rattenbury 27). "No building of [Wright's] was ever without flowers and foliage. In his interiors, he specified large, generous bowls of fresh flowers, as well as special places, integral with the architecture, where growing plants should be cultivated," Bruce Pfeiffer says in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Treasures of Taliesin*. James's writing has also been labeled organic. Ward says, "James delights 'in deep-breathing economy and an organic form'" (6). Additionally, Leon Edel describes James's organic writing and use of space in a beautiful way: "He discussed also the secrets of the imagination, the 'deep well of unconscious cerebration,' recognizing like Coleridge—and Freud—that within the unconscious the deepest and richest part of man's art invisibly grows and finds its shape" (330-31). Certainly, the ten books of *Wings* are organic in many aspects: the blending of the interior world of Kate and Densher's Europe with the exterior world of Milly's America, the merging of

the world of finance—the prospect of Milly’s American wealth sliding into the hands of Kate’s European poverty—the fusion of old art (the Bronzino Portrait) and new art (James’s work), and finally, *Wings* is organic if looked at in the light of one of John Rattenbury’s more specific definitions of organic architecture:

Organic architecture is architecture appropriate to time, appropriate to place, and appropriate to man. Appropriate to time means a building that belongs to the era in which it is created, addresses contemporary life-styles, social patterns and conditions, and employs available materials and new technological methods resourcefully and honestly (27).

James’s novel exemplifies all of Rattenbury’s criteria for an appropriation to time, for *Wings* does belong to an era of a changing Europe and America, addresses the new financial wealth of America, New York in particular, and certainly James employs new literary methods in order to give his work a “sense of motion rather than static arrangement” (Ward 15).

Spatial form, consciousness, and time are all prime actors in Wright’s and James’s organic art forms. Wright’s elimination of interior walls, and “except in sleeping areas,” his elimination of “doors and partitions” mold “continuous space freed by the removal of posts, columns, corners, and thresholds. As spaces began to unfold gently, boring right angles were banished from Wright’s vocabulary” (Maddex 53). Likewise, James’s removal of certain established “doors and partitions” of literature are abundant in *Wings*. Essentially removing his heroine from the last hundred or so pages of the novel is certainly not closing in on the Victorian “happy ending.” “Milly quietly bows out of her own novel,” Judith Woolf observes, and “from now on we will see her, indeed we will see everything, only through Densher’s eyes” (122). Those “boring right triangles” extinguished from Wright’s vocabulary are equally nowhere to be

found in the mind of James. The opening up of the interior of the house and the opening up of the interior of the novel are achieved wonderfully by both men, and the reader, as well as the home dweller, can do nothing but experience the change of focus from the projected expectations of the exterior, to the unique, intricate experiences of the interior.

“James does not merely hand his readers a *product*; he hands them a *process*,” (71) Ralf Norrman says; along with utilizing spatial form in the freezing of moments such as Kate’s mirror and Milly’s portrait, James suspends time by requiring Kate, Densher, and especially Milly, to “wait.” This pausing “process” begins when Kate waits from the opening sentence of *Wings* to the very last sentence, when she waits for Densher’s decision about Milly’s money. Densher waits for Milly to see him in her palace in Venice, after she learns of his betrayal, but most of all, Milly waits. Ultimately, Milly waits to live—something that will only happen after her death. But Milly also waits to die, and James creates a process of suspended time that ultimately is not released until Kate’s final words. Frank uses Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* to illustrate a “breaking up of temporal sequence,” (17) which Flaubert achieves by creating a scene where “action is going on simultaneously at three levels; and the physical position of each level is fair index to its spiritual significance” (16). *Wings* also breaks temporal sequence with the physical positions of Milly, Densher, and Kate. Milly is at the highest level in her palace in Venice, surrounded by art and lavish furnishings, while Densher is placed on the middle level, in Venice also, but sheepishly waiting for Milly’s invitation to enter her level, and finally Kate is positioned on the bottom level, for her status never really rises above her desperate attempt in the opening scene of the novel to establish a home and position for herself under her father’s roof. In fact, Kate sinks even lower than her initial level, when she realizes that her love with Densher has been altered forever.

Time, then, is cunningly displaced in the world of James's novel; Wright, also, plays with time by using cantilevers [architectural projections "reaching well beyond [their] base of support" (Maddex 27)]. Maddex goes on to explain that "a cantilever visually expands a structure beyond its own footprint, adding space in the air that does not have to be built on the ground. Wright used cantilevers in dramatically overhanging rooflines, elevated terraces and balconies, walls, trim, even planters" (27). Like the levels that Flaubert and James build in the novel, Wright breaks up temporal spaces of the home, creating a sense of time hovering in the air above the foundation of the house, "fixed on the interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area" (Frank 17).

Immobilizing time, developing a central consciousness, creating interiority, using spatial form—James and Wright utilized all of these tools in their careful design structures, but the one element that perhaps ties the two men so closely together is interiority. In her essay "The Architecture of Manners: Henry James, Edith Wharton, and *The Mount*," Sarah Luria muses over the interesting story of James's visit to the famous Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina. In a letter James wrote to Edith Wharton in February of 1905, "Henry James was dumbstruck," Luria says (1). James's words to Wharton sum up his aversion to the architectural wonder:

The desolation and discomfort of the . . . whole scene—are, in spite of the mitigating millions everywhere expressed, indescribable. But I can't go into it—it's too much of a 'subject': I mean one's sense of the extraordinary impenitent madness (of millions) which led to the erection in this vast niggery wilderness, of so gigantic and elaborate a monument to all that *isn't* socially possible there. It's, *in effect*, like a gorgeous practical joke—but at one's own expense, after all, if one

has to live in solitude in these league-long marble halls, and sit in alternate Gothic and Palladian cathedrals, as it were—where now only the temperature stalks about—with the ‘regrets,’ sighing along the wind, of those who have declined.  
(qtd. in Luria 1)

James’s thorough sermon on his reaction to the Biltmore House directly relates to his dedication to the art of interiority in his novels; Luria makes the insightful observation that “James can’t go into the subject of Biltmore, because the house has literally no interior for him to go into” (1). No organic form exists in the immense “league-long” halls, and certainly none of Wright’s equally passionate interiority is to be found in such a structure.

James’s return to America in 1904 after a twenty-year absence had an “overpowering effect” (7) on him according to Adeline Tintner. Architecture was a fascination for James all of his life, but the “new structures with their alarming visual effect, the society they serviced, and the abominable effect (‘its bold, bad promiscuousness’) they appeared to have on American mores,” (9) disturbed James immensely on his return to New York. Of course, it is during the first decade of the twentieth-century that Wright is producing his innovative ideas in architecture, though there seems to be no evidence that James was aware of Wright’s unique style—a style so closely akin to that of the author. James would have written an entirely different letter to his friend, Edith Wharton, if he had visited Illinois instead of New York. I think Wright’s Prairie architecture would have certainly fascinated James, for Wright, like James, always began his houses with a specific idea, a “unit,” and then “[fit] the design to the requirements as much as possible . . . and never [allowed] the petty wants of his client to interfere with the architectural expression of his design” (Storrer 55). James, likewise, began *Wings* with a specific idea—his own unit system: “The idea, reduced to its essence, is that of a young person conscious of a

great capacity for life, but early stricken and doomed, condemned to die under short respite, while also enamoured of the world” (3). James also never allowed criticism of his style to interfere with his idea, and so it is quite unfortunate that the two artists never met.

“To truly appreciate architecture, one must experience it—walk around a building, move through it and spend time in it” (Rattenbury 27), and the same is true of literature. *The Wings of the Dove* and Wright houses are interiority experiences and masterpieces of consciousness technique. The use of spatial form to disrupt the sequenced structure of time and the blending of exterior with interior—producing a continuous flow of space—connects James and Wright together as artists and as innovators in their respective fields. One must experience a Wright creation just as one experiences a James creation; “A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism,” James so wonderfully says in “The Art of Fiction” (862). The intriguing confines of a novel such as *Wings of the Dove*, as well as the welcoming walls of a Wright house, wait patiently for us to move around in them, spend time in them, and experience their living, breathing form. Wright designed his entrances much like James designed his novels—“the entrance beckons from the shadows . . . down a walkway, turn right, turn left, up the steps, turn again—the architect makes us work to uncover his grand scheme” (Maddex 31). And we shall explore the even grander scheme of Virginia Woolf in the next two chapters, delving headlong into Wright’s ideas of interiority and space *inside* the home. His work with his late Prairie homes, especially the Robie House and his evolvment from the Prairie style to the Usonian style parallel Woolf’s intricate character development and use of space in the novel. The openness and movement through spaces typical of Wright’s vision for interior living correlates with the growing ideas about human consciousness that Woolf used so strikingly in her work.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### ***TO THE LIGHTHOUSE AND WRIGHT'S LATE PRAIRIE HOMES***

Space and time in the novel proceed from James's concentration of interiority and consciousness in *The Wings of the Dove* to Virginia Woolf's juxtaposition of character, consciousness, time, and space in *To the Lighthouse*. It seems to me a natural progression from James to Woolf, from *The Wings of the Dove* into *To the Lighthouse*, for as we leave Milly's consciousness and enter into Lily Briscoe's thoughts, Woolf makes an even deeper plunge into spatial form. James, however, was a huge influence on Woolf. Lyndall Gordon movingly observes that Woolf's prose "moves back and forth with deliberate hesitation. She once said that for her life was like a novel by Henry James and, at one time, she had his photograph on her writing-table. She followed James in her search for fullness of definition" (67). Placing the reader inside the mind of Lily and also using space more extensively than James to create a halting of time, Woolf produces a novel that like Wright's Prairie houses is a unified experience. Jeanne Schulkind in her introduction to Woolf's *Moments of Being*, gives just one example of Woolf's use of space: "In *To the Lighthouse* two passages of time separated by an interval of ten years and seemingly selected at random are ultimately locked in a pattern of significant moments in the minds of several of the characters" (21). The space of time between the two sections of the novel provides what Frank exemplifies in his definition of pure time: "Pure time, obviously, is not time at all—it is perception in a moment of time, that is to say, space" (26-27). Wright uses space in exactly the same way, especially interior space. In this chapter I will explore Woolf's multiple uses of space along with Wright's to demonstrate the extraordinary similarities between these two Modernist artists.



The Arthur Heurtley House (1902) is a good place to begin when comparing Wright's architecture to Woolf's work in *To the Lighthouse*. Like his previous Prairie homes, Wright again used Roman brick to perpetuate the horizontal façade of the house, but with the Heurtley House, Wright chose rose hues, in part to "create a new fashion sensation." (O'Gorman 147)



Figure 10: Arthur and Grace Heurtley Residence S.074 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

The rose colors, however, more importantly than creating a fashion statement, actually soften the exterior of the building, creating a warm, pleasing invitation to enter the house. He also had the brick laid differently "in alternating recesses and projections [creating] the imagery across the façade that resembled the lines fashioned by board-and-batten wood siding" (147). Another difference from his previous work is a prominent central fireplace, "a massively broad, low chimney [that] sits as the central axis" (147).



Figure 11: Arthur and Grace Heurtley Residence S.074: Living Room in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Wright is using and creating spaces that invite the dweller to perceive the individual parts of the house and at the same time recognize a unity encompassed in the exterior of the building. In addition to blending the land and the structure, Wright is now expanding on the overhanging porch with a new kind of entranceway to further draw the dweller into the house; the entrance to the Heurtley House is set inside a low privacy wall, so that upon entering the house, the dweller is engulfed by the exterior walls, yet it is not a suffocating envelopment, but a soothing spacial experience—a simultaneous blend of exterior and interior.

Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* describes what Wright may have been trying to accomplish with his unique entranceway. Bachelard, like Frank, connects time with space:

At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability—a being who does not want to melt

away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to ‘suspend’ its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for. (8)

Frank observes that all of the authors he studies in his work on spatial form “maintain a continual juxtaposition between aspects of the past and the present so that both are fused in one comprehensive view” (63). Of course, this is quite evident in *To the Lighthouse*, but Wright’s innovative idea of entering a home like that of the Heurtley House also exemplifies that juxtaposition of space and suspension of time described by Bachelard and Frank. Robert Twombly talks about the Heurtley House in the same spatial aspects:

A second-level porch under abbreviated eaves and behind substantial piers, first-floor front windows deeply recessed across a terrace from a low wall, and an entrance tucked in the dark alcove of a Richardsonian arch do not, even on the sunniest days, relieve the blocklike, seemingly impenetrable façade. The house guards its openings jealously and with its weighty look appears to withdraw within its stonelike walls. Since the Heurtleys were not particularly happy together, inwardness and solidity may have been Wright’s way of making them focus attention on each other without external distractions. (74)

Despite Twombly’s musings about the Heurtleys’ relationship, the idea of inwardness and solidity is a good example of Wright’s increased focus on interiors—a focus that manifests itself in new exterior construction and as I shall discuss later, in his culminating Prairie masterpiece—the Robie House.

Lily Briscoe is like that entranceway to Wright’s house—Woolf introduces us to her using space much like Wright’s Heurtley entranceway in the “dark alcove of a Richardsonian

arch.” The reader has been inside the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay for several pages as she muses over family and guests who are milling about the Ramsay’s house and property. Woolf’s introduction to Lily is like ducking behind the low exterior rose-colored wall and finding a door to an interior world: “Suddenly a loud cry, as of a sleepwalker, half roused, something about sung out with the utmost intensity in her ear, made her turn apprehensively to see if any one heard him. Only Lily Briscoe, she was glad to find; and that did not matter” (Woolf 16-17). I find it interesting that Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay say that Lily’s overhearing Mr. Ramsay’s exclamation (“something between a croak and a song”) (16) does not matter; Woolf connects the consciousnesses of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. That is why their minds can handle external stimulation in a similarly calm way. Mrs. Ramsay remembers suddenly that Lily is painting a picture of her and this is the introduction to Lily that Woolf so artfully creates; it is an identical spatial realization that Wright accomplishes with his secret entrance. “But the sight of the girl standing on the edge of the lawn painting reminded her;” Woolf writes, “she was supposed to be keeping her head as much in the same position as possible for Lily’s picture. Lily’s picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled” (17). Here we enter into Lily’s thoughts as we would enter into the Heurtley house—suddenly, yet guardedly, for Woolf takes us in and out of Lily’s consciousness—teasing a little and then slowly bringing us in and freezing time as Lily stands in front of her painting. We are actually frozen from this point on in Lily’s consciousness until the final page of the novel, existing in a continual play between past and present, between the exteriority of the brick façade and the interiority of the house connected by the unity of the central hearth— a unity revealed in *To the Lighthouse* as Lily’s picture of Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily’s connection to Mrs. Ramsay is maintained throughout the novel but Woolf also goes beyond the two characters and experiments with the blending of consciousness—something

she will perfect in *The Waves*. Lily and William Bankes, for example, have the same thoughts as they stand together in front of the bay. Combining the two character's thoughts, Woolf writes: "Both of them looked at the dunes far away, and instead of merriment felt come over them some sadness—because the thing was completed partly, and partly because distant views seem to outlast by a million years (Lily thought) the gazer and to be communing already with a sky which beholds an earth entirely at rest" (20). Within this sentence, Woolf has jumped from the consciousness of Lily and William and back to just Lily again. This circular motion reinforces that juxtaposition between past and present that is so important in creating spatial form. And it is almost identical to what Wright accomplishes with his interiors. Like Woolf's dance between Lily and William, Wright created foyers as a connector between the entranceway and the living area of the home.

In place of the Victorian parlor, Wright's foyer in the Prairie house functioned not as a stuffy room where people sat waiting to be received into the home. The foyer or entrance hall ceiling was generally set lower than the dining room or living area of the house, so that upon entering the living area, the dweller experiences a "release and lift to the spirit" (Maddex 58). "Usually the entry is placed so that you have only a glimpse of the living room as you enter the residence through the front door. The view is just enough to tantalize and entice you to move into the main room to discover the mystery around the corner" (58). Woolf, likewise, presents the entire first section of *To the Lighthouse* as a foyer, a kind-of holding, yet tantalizing place, where the reader is suspended in time waiting to see if the lighthouse trip will actually come to fruition: "There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, Mr. Ramsay snapped out irascibly. How did he know? she asked. The wind often changed" (31). James, the young son of the Ramsay's, will ask several times throughout Section

One of the novel whether they are going to the lighthouse; it is almost as if Woolf wants the reader to catch only a glimpse of the time that will pass eventually from the evening of the festivities at the Ramsay house to the actual trip to the lighthouse many years later. But when the reader finally does experience Lily's "vision" at the end of the novel, a vision that coincides with the eventual lighthouse trip, it is identical to the release the dweller feels upon stepping from the low level of the foyer in the Prairie house to the openness of the living area. Whether it takes only ten seconds or, in Lily's case, ten years to experience the sensation, both Wright and Woolf succeed in freezing the moment that lies between the two levels.

The ten-year gap is significant in setting apart Woolf from James, or, in fact, Woolf from most other authors of the modernist period. "Of all the stream of consciousness novelists, Virginia Woolf alone seems to have presented a consistent and comprehensive treatment of time," Shiv Kumar says. "Time with her is almost a mode of perception, a filter which distills all phenomena before they are apprehended in their true significance and relationship" (62). But even before we jump the span of ten years, it is worthwhile to study the famous dinner scene in *To the Lighthouse*, especially the thoughts of Lily. Woolf actually suspends time in a scene that normally would present itself as a sequenced depiction of conversation among the fifteen dinner guests, a conversation that might focus on two or three people and then move on rather quickly to the next scene. The dinner scene acts as the filter that Goldman talks about, for if we follow Lily's thoughts for the twenty-nine pages of the dinner, then we can, as Frank stresses "suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity" (15). Perception in the dinner scene is of utmost importance in creating spatial form; in particular Lily's perceptions of Mrs. Ramsay form the internal pattern of references that only at the end of the novel can be "apprehended as a unity."

Lily's repeated references to her painting during the dinner suspends the reader and freezes the moment, despite the conversational drop-ins here and there from the other characters. "I must move the tree to the middle; that matters—nothing else," Lily thinks (86). Then after fluctuating between Mr. Tansley's and Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts, Woolf brings the reader always back to Lily. After an especially long passage where the reader is immersed in Mr. Tansley's obsessive thoughts about Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf begins a new paragraph with "Lily Briscoe knew all that" (90). And even though most critics have settled on the notion that Mrs. Ramsay is the central figure of the novel, I maintain that Lily actually is the center. It can be argued, as I have said before, that Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are one consciousness and certainly they share a connection at the dinner table when Lily must be nice to Mr. Tansley. Mrs. Ramsay tells Lily to "apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man" with just "a glance in her eyes" (92). Even while Lily is receiving these mental messages from Mrs. Ramsay, however, her focus still remains on her painting: "She remembered that the next morning she would move the tree further towards the middle" (93), and again nine pages later in the midst of deciding that "she need not marry, thank Heaven," (102) Lily looks at the "salt cellar on the pattern" and Woolf repeats "She would move the tree rather more to the middle" (102). The centrality of Lily's focus on the tree in her painting can be compared in spatial terms to Wright's work on the Edwin H. Cheney House (1903) and his Prairie masterpiece, the Robie House (1906).

If we look at Woolf's dinner scene as a spotlight for fusing time through centrality and ultimate unity in the form of Lily's vision about her painting—specifically her placement of the tree, then we can look at Wright's equally innovative work in his late Prairie homes as another

spotlight for spatial realization in the home. The Cheney House was the first Prairie house where Wright introduced the open floor design.



Figure 12: Mamah Borthwick and Edwin H. Cheney Residence S.104 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Still seeking to get rid of rooms that could only be looked at as “independent boxes,” (O’Gorman 158) Wright designed the “main rooms—living room, dining room, and library—[to] all flow into one another” (158). This open space was a new concept in the early part of the century, completely breaking away from the small rooms of the Victorian home. In fact, in 1889 when Wright designed his own house, he included a Victorian element in the entranceway to the home. A small nook with two benches and a curtain to conceal the small sitting area is very much a Victorian concept. The complete openness of the Cheney interior is so absolutely different from Wright’s own home design that it is impossible not to realize the profound effect the new way of looking at space must have on the dweller. Exposed ceiling beams, multiple windows with stained glass geometric etchings, warm colors, and built-in furniture to maintain that openness are all concepts that contributed to a new way of thinking about the home.



Another important feature of the Cheney house is the line of windows—fifty-two of them—all etched with Wright’s art designs. Wright repeats this line of windows in the Frederick C. Robie house. Robie hired Wright to build a house that would be “free of the clutter and ‘conglomeration’ to which architecture had become tied” (226). And not only does Wright succeed in designing the ultimate Prairie style home, but he also succeeds in creating a house that we can observe in strictly spatial terms. All aspects of the Robie house—exterior and interior—embody the characteristics found in Woolf’s study of Lily in *To the Lighthouse*.



Figure 13: Frederick C. Robie Residence S.127 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

I visited the Robie house in November of 2005. After entering the front door (which is hidden on the side of the house), I stood in the foyer, which is like Wright’s foyers that I discussed before, a place of transition to the living area. In the Robie house, however, there is the unique experience of climbing a small flight of stairs from the foyer until you find yourself completely out in the openness of the living area with the hearth at the center of the long passageway of

open rooms. Beyond the aesthetic sensation of a sense of freedom from confined, restraining rooms, the Robie living area exemplifies almost all of the qualifications that Frank determines are crucial for achieving spatial form in literature.



Figure 14: Frederick C. Robie Residence S.127: Living Room (1970s Photograph) in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

I find the Robie house, above all of Wright's other Prairie homes, to most resemble what Frank speaks about in his theory. "The continual reference and cross reference of images and symbols that must be referred to each other spacially throughout the time-act of reading" (34) are present when you stand in the Robie alcove of the dining room. Facing the central hearth and gazing over the hearth into the dining room, while seeing the images of the stained glass windows reflected on the floor (in a line all the way up the length of the living space) is an experience I will never forget. In terms of spatial considerations, the feeling is identical to the one I get when

Woolf continually gives me Lily's symbol and image of her painting. Standing inside the Robie house, even with the annoying noise of the tour guide in the background, I could feel the centrality of the hearth, the unity of the exterior with the interior, and above all, the moment, for me, was frozen, suspended for a few seconds.

Virginia Woolf wrote *To the Lighthouse* as a way to deal with her ambivalent feelings toward her mother and her father. "This is not made up, it is the literal fact," Woolf said (qtd. in Gordon 28). Woolf "pictured her father as a spare, desolate stake" (Gordon 79) and her mother as somewhat more of a mystery, since she died when Woolf was fairly young. Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay are therefore not depicted in the usual "conventional progression, but [Woolf] pictured them on two definitive days, about ten years apart" (28). Displaying early Freudian techniques, (Woolf did not begin to read Freud until after she finished *To the Lighthouse*) she experienced a psychological release after completing the novel: "I just rubbed out a good deal of the force of my mother's memory by writing about her in *To the Lighthouse*, so I rubbed out much of his memory there too" (*Moments of Being* 108). If we think of the Robie living space as a novel, then the two ends of the space, the dining room and the living room alcove, represent Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay. But the center of the room—the fireplace—is Lily Briscoe. Gordon keenly observes that it takes a modern artist (Lily) to "give distinctive shape to [Woolf's] distant memories of [her] family" (28). And it is the central figure of Lily and the unity that Lily's painting provides at the end of the novel that achieves the remarkable element of spatial form.

As Lily stands on the bank looking at her picture, Woolf has placed Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James across the water and out of sight of Lily. The space between them seems immense, yet when viewed in terms of the entire novel, the space is actually quite small. In between the dinner scene and the final lighthouse voyage stands always Lily; her vision becomes the ultimate

central hearth that brings together both ends of the novel. “So much depends . . . upon distance,” Lily says, and indeed space and time are critical in Woolf’s novels. Wright’s work in his Prairie style homes also depends entirely on his use of interior distance, his placing of scenes, so to speak, just as Woolf does. “I think a great deal of my future,” Woolf wrote, “and settle what book I am to write—how I shall re-form the novel” (89). In *The Waves* and in Wright’s later work we will explore just how much detail each artist goes into to achieve and reform the ultimate spatial experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### ***THE WAVES AND WRIGHT'S EARLY USONIAN HOMES***

If Virginia Woolf built on Henry James's ideas of consciousness and interiority and added her own unique elements of time and memory to create spatial experiences in *To the Lighthouse*, then she absolutely breaks free from James and perfects all of these things in *The Waves*. Influenced by her readings of Freud, and also, sadly, dealing with her own mental problems, Woolf wrote a novel that is, if nothing else, a study in self-analysis and an exploration of the conscious and the unconscious self. Lyndall Gordon observes that Woolf's fictional women and children "hoard private connotations because their scope for public discourse is limited by their inferior status" (58). Gordon cites James Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* as a perfect example of a child whose feelings for his father are "outwardly silent, [but] inwardly they are raging" (58). Without going into the Oedipal complex, for I feel it has no direct bearing on my work in spatial form, obviously Woolf was quite familiar with Freud's theory of the male having the suppressed desire to kill his father and marry his mother by the time she wrote *The Waves*. The three male characters in *The Waves*, subsequently, all have "issues," but more interestingly, the three female characters all have that "inward raging" that Gordon so well describes. Woolf brilliantly deals with her own turbulent feelings for her father when she writes, but her depiction of the characters' thoughts in *The Waves* is, I argue, her masterpiece in consciousness technique. Gordon again makes an important observation about Woolf's writing and the extraordinary release Woolf must have felt while writing *The Waves*:

In *A Room of One's Own* she points out that the indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius found so difficult to bear was, in the

woman's case, not indifference but hostility. 'The world did not say to her as it did to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write?' (63)

I see Woolf as an interesting combination of all six characters in *The Waves*, but primarily I see her as Bernard, who Neville describes as seeing "every one with blurred edges" (51). Through her own blurred, somewhat disturbed vision, Woolf does indeed present all of the characters as one continuous consciousness, a consciousness with no distinct edge. Late in the novel, Bernard, sounding like Woolf expressing her own complex feelings about the mind and consciousness, says, "And we ourselves, walking abreast, what do we oppose, with this random flicker of light in us that we call brain and feeling, how can we do battle against this flood; what has permanence?" (227). Woolf tries, I think, to answer that question with the structure of the novel itself; she battles with her unconscious by juxtaposing character with nature.

For example, before each area of character thought, (for I cannot describe Woolf's novel in sections or chapters—she abandons that here) the reader experiences a page or two of nature description, mainly of the ocean and the movement of the waves: "The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously" (7). From the first page of the novel, then, Woolf has placed the reader in that unconscious motion that will continue in an amazing, if not absolutely perfect, moment of spatial form. "I am not concerned with the single life but with lives together, thinking them into one story," Woolf wrote in an early draft of *The Waves* (Gordon 204), and that idea of continuity that builds from *To the Lighthouse* is comparable to Wright's work in his Usonian phase.

Wright built his first Usonian home, the Herbert Jacobs House, in 1936, five years after the publication of *The Waves*. Wright had been in somewhat of a creative slump since his work

on the Prairie homes, and many people had simply written off his reputation as an innovative architect. After the Great Depression, not too much emphasis was placed on building the perfect residence for the wealthy clients of Wright's past endeavors. However, like Woolf, Wright persisted in his craft despite rumblings among his detractors and emerged once again with what can rightly be described as a masterpiece in the private residence. Robert Twombly speculates, "Perhaps intellectual and cultural upheaval or the questioning of economic and political institutions encouraged him to redefine the social purposes of his work, or perhaps the prevailing mood was unusually receptive to innovation" (241). Wright made numerous material changes on the Usonian house from the Prairie home, and I will not go into every detail of building material, but will instead concentrate on the things Wright perfected, as Woolf did in her writing, to create and maintain the blending of interior and exterior, and additionally create the open spaces and lines that are essential to developing spatial experiences in the home.

Wright wanted to move on from his Prairie phase, as Woolf wanted to move on from her *To the Lighthouse* purging of parental emotions. Woolf writes of her *Lighthouse* experience: "I suppose I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion" (*Moments of Being* 81). Wright, Twombly says, "since 1929 if not before, . . . had been rethinking the problem of the single-family residence" (240). Like the continual motion of Woolf's wave, Wright designed the Jacobs House to create an even more continuous line between nature and building. Wright's earlier horizontal fixation became prominent in every aspect of the Usonian structure:

A two-by-four horizontal module or grid governed the entire plan—[Wright's] drawings and on the floor itself—enabling the contractor to locate doors and windows easily. Board and battens ran horizontally, reflecting the lines of the

house. So determined was Wright to achieve horizontal consistency that he insisted each screw be left with its slot parallel to the floor. (242)



Figure 15: Herbert and Katherine Jacobs First Residence S.234 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Wright replaced the garage with a carport, further integrating man-made machines and buildings with nature and bringing the openness of his interiors out to the exterior of the house. Wright says, “A garage is no longer necessary as cars are made. A carport will do, with liberal overhead shelter and walls on two sides. Detroit still has the livery-stable mind. It believes that the car is a horse and must be stabled” (104). Wright’s comical comparison of car and horse is typical of his sarcastic wit, yet the stabled comment is poignant when looking at Usonian structures; even the place to store the family car has now opened up.

More examples of Wright’s opening up the interior mirror Woolf’s prose in *The Waves*. Instead of hanging light fixtures, Wright built in lights and even furniture, making them appear, as Woolf’s six characters eventually appear, to be one with the structure: “Attached to the walls as part of the architecture, built-ins would provide ‘complete harmony, nothing to arrange,



nothing to disturb: room and furniture an ‘entity’” (Maddex 77). Following his late Prairie style of lighting the home with multiple windows and recessed lighting, Wright developed an even more intuitive feeling for interior lighting than ever before. “Artificial lighting is nearly as important as daylight. It too should be [an] integral part of the house—be as near as daylighting as possible,” Wright maintains. These thoughts on lighting mirror Fish’s thoughts on interpretive strategies. Fish says, “Interpretive strategies are not put into execution after reading (the pure act of perception in which I do not believe); they are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as it is usually assumed, arising from them” (168). Wright’s light fixtures inside the house are not external to the structure; they are not added on after the structure is completed. They are part of the shape of the entire house, merging with the daylight. “Day lighting can be beautifully managed by the architect if he has a feeling for the course of the sun as it goes from east to west and at the inevitable angle to the south. The sun is the great luminary of all life. It should serve as such in the building of any house,” Wright explains.

He goes on to integrate the interior lighting with the natural exterior light:

In 1893, I began to get rid of the bare light-bulb and have ever since been concealing it on interior decks or placing it in recesses in such a way that it comes from the building itself; the effect should be that it comes from the same source as natural light. Sometimes we light the grounds about the house putting outside light so that it lights the interior of the rooms. Wiring for lights, as piping for plumbing and heating, should not show all over the house unless by special design—any more that you would have organs of your body on the outside of

your skin. Lighting fixtures should (as should all others) be absorbed *in* the structure, so that their office is *of* the structure. (115)

The outside lighting coming into the home is just what Fish says the reader must do—she must move from outside the text into the depths of the novel. This interpretive strategy gives the text its shape, and the uniting of natural and artificial light also gives the home *its* shape. Wright concludes his luminary ruminations with this statement that coincides beautifully with Fish's thoughts on the importance of the reader: "[After all this] the building has been properly orientated" (115). After experiencing the lighting effects of a Wright Usonian residence, the dweller and the building become one—oriented, as are the reader and the text.

And the blending of reader and text continue in *The Waves*. Once again, in the italicized breaks between the characters' thoughts, Woolf gradually moves from a polyphonic voice to a univocal one. In her description of the sunlight coming in on a house, or more probably a beach cottage, Woolf sounds like Wright in his descriptions of interior and exterior illumination:

Now, too, the rising sun came in at the window, touching the red-edged curtain and began to bring out circles and lines. Now in the growing light its whiteness settled in the plate; the blade condensed its gleam. Chairs and cupboards loomed behind so that though each was separate they seemed inextricably involved. (75)

The light through the window becomes involved with the structure, illuminating individual things—curtains, plates, chairs, and cupboards—yet fusing them into one continuous image. And Woolf does not stop her progression toward an ultimate unity in the space of the novel. Just after the italicized break mentioned above, there is a kind of dance that goes on between the thoughts of Bernard and Neville for sixteen pages until finally the reader is unsure of just who is speaking. At one point, Neville sees Bernard walking towards him and says, "As he approaches

I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody—with whom?—with Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question, Who am I?” (83). And the passage immediately following changes voice from Neville to Bernard and we are back in Bernard’s thoughts as we had been for several paragraphs before Neville was speaking. The character juxtaposition is, of course, creating spatial form simply because from the beginning of the Bernard/Neville thought, the reader is not entirely sure where the two characters physically are. Woolf only tells us that they are in college. There are mentions of curtains and windows and shops throughout, but like the opening italicized passage, these individual descriptive props are simply melded into the background of the structure of thought; the reader must become Fish’s interpretive strategist and work to “orient” with the text.

Immediately after Neville’s “Who am I?” Bernard speaks and says, “How strange the willow looks seen together. I was Byron, and the tree was Byron’s tree, lachrymose, down-showering, lamenting. Now that we look at the tree together, it has a combed look, each branch distinct, and I will tell you what I feel, under the compulsion of your clarity” (83). Neville had just a page earlier also looked at the willow: “Look how the willow shoots its fine sprays into the air!” and “I see behind the leaves the grave, yet eternally joyous buildings, which seem porous, not gravid; light, though set so immemorially in the ancient turf. Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm” (82). Here is where the reader, as Fish maintains, must begin to interpret. Who is Bernard speaking to when he says “How strange” and “We look at the tree together”? Is it Neville? Or is it the reader? Have the reader, Bernard and Neville all merged into one at this point?

Also during Wright’s Usonian period, “open patios in the rear were becoming more popular than covered porches in the front,” Twombly (245) and the same can be said of

modernist texts. Woolf invites, almost demands, that the reader circle *The Waves* to get out from the covered porch of the linear narrative. While some readers may not want to work to get into the consciousness of one character, let alone the consciousness of six characters, work must be done to interpret and appreciate the depth of the novel, and to arrive at that moment of present singularity. Fish answers a very important question about interpretation:

The answer to the question ‘why do different texts give rise to different sequences of interpretive acts?’ is that *they don’t have to*, an answer which implies strongly that ‘they’ don’t exist. Indeed it has always been possible to put into action interpretive strategies designed to make all texts one, or to put it more accurately, to be forever making the same text. (170)

Wright and Woolf both fervently resist “making the same text.” And while readers of a certain “modernist” interpretive community may find it easier to experience the combination of spatiality and temporality in a Woolf novel, certainly readers who may not be familiar with the period cannot as Fish says, “misread the text” (311); they can only “mispreread the text” (311). Echoing Freudian thought, Woolf has Louis say, “I am for ever sleeping and waking” (96) and certainly the reader, like the dweller who prefers the open patio to the closed-in porch, must be receptive and open to the text to avoid reading the same text over and over again.

To read *The Waves* is not only an extremely poetic experience, but it also requires a suspension of the reader’s ideas about character. In the previous works I have studied, each character is an individual (with the possible exception of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay at some points) and this is where Woolf elevates her study of consciousness above that of Henry James. Like Wright’s built-in and movable furniture and recessing hanging light fixtures to perpetuate the openness of a room, Woolf pushes singularity completely out of the novel. The thoughts of

Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Rhoda, and Jinny all slowly merge together into one consciousness by the end of the novel. Woolf uses repetitive phrases spoken from one character to the next to ease the transition from polyphonic to univocal. For example, early in the novel when the six characters are still in school, Neville is speaking: "I begin to wish for firelight, privacy, and the limbs of one person" (52). The next paragraph begins with Louis who repeats, "I begin to wish for night to come" (52). And much later in the novel when the six characters are walking together, their thoughts repeat and build on each others': "Now they vanish," (229) Louis says. "They vanish, towards the lake," Rhoda adds. "What song shall we hear?" (229) Louis asks, and Rhoda answers, "We hear a drumming on the roofs of a fasting city. We hear the beech trees and the birch trees raise their branches" (230). Woolf does this over and over throughout the entire book, expanding it into one instance where all six characters' narratives become the narration of one. Bernard has been speaking for several pages when he says, "What I call 'my life' it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (276). A few pages later, Bernard (supposedly) is still speaking, but now says, "Who am I? I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know" (288).

Joseph Frank's observation about the importance of time in connecting spatial form in the plastic arts with spatial form in literature is pertinent to Woolf's merging of the six characters. Frank argues, "With the juxtaposition of past and present, history becomes ahistorical. Time is no longer felt as an objective, casual progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods; now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out. And here we have a striking parallel with the plastic arts" (63). Woolf's

approximately three hundred pages of continuous thought in *The Waves* has absolutely no distinction between periods of the character's lives, although gradually we realize that we are following them from childhood to middle age and significant events do happen in their lives. But, just as Wright chose to use indirect lighting and built-in furniture, Woolf has done the same thing with words, with phrases. *The Waves* is such a fine example of juxtaposition of consciousness that all feeling of sequence is gone. The work is "locked in a timeless unity" (63).

Toward the end of *The Waves*, the six characters meet for the last time at Hampton Court. "Hampton Court," Bernard says and repeats, "Hampton Court. This is our meeting place" (210). To achieve spatial form in the novel, I have reiterated the blending of interior with exterior; in the last eighty-seven pages of the novel, Woolf accomplishes this blending as does Wright in another of his Usonian residences, the Pope-Leighey House (1941).



Figure 16: Pope-Leighey Residence S.234 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Under the façade of simplicity, the Pope-Leighey House "in reality . . . interweaves spaces like a complex three-dimensional fabric," (Maddex 113). Bernard's simple statement, "This is our meeting place" also conceals a complexity that Woolf has been developing for the entire novel.

Wright designed the furniture of the Pope-Leighey House “to reflect the architecture—little offshoots of the overall plan” (Maddex 111). Rather than built-in furniture, Wright decided to make the plywood pieces easily movable to “suit changing needs” (111).



Figure 17: Pope-Leighey Residence S.268: Dining Alcove, View To Bedroom Wing in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993



Figure 18: Pope-Leighey Residence S.268: Living Room in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Woolf's six characters are also easily movable and interchangeable throughout the novel, but especially in the Hampton Court scene. Bernard describes his feelings as he meets his friends:

There at the door by the Inn, our meeting place, they are already standing—Susan, Louis, Rhoda, Jinny and Neville. They have come together already. In a moment, when I have joined them, another arrangement will form, another pattern. Already at fifty yards' distance I feel the order of my being changed.

The tug of the magnet of their society tells upon me. (210)

Like Wright's movable furniture, the six characters are forever changing patterns and blending together. Woolf has taken spatial form and represented it ideally, as Frank suggested, not only by freezing the moment of the friends' meeting, but by suggesting to the reader that the present



moment as Bernard sees it will not remain fixed in the consciousness of only one specific character, but will flow freely in a circular offshoots, freezing here in Neville's consciousness, then in Susan's, and so on. The blending of exterior with interior has culminated in the blending of six separate beings into one, and Fish's reader has not "made the text disappear" but has used the text, has *worked* with the text and developed a spatial as well as a temporal connection.

I find it extraordinary that Frank did not choose *The Waves* as an example of spatial form in the modern novel, for numerous scenes create that present moment. Neville's observations of his friends during the Hampton Court scene place him at once at the table among them and simultaneously outside somewhere remembering the "wind sweeping over the ploughed land and some bird singing—perhaps some intoxicated lark. Has the waiter heard of me, or those furtive everlasting couples, now loitering, now holding back and looking at the trees which are not yet dark enough to shelter their prostrate bodies?" (212). Neville's thoughts seem random, yet they are not, for Neville is combining his past memories of Susan, the country girl of the group, with his present observations of people in the restaurant, along with his sensorial memories of Susan's farm. Jack Stewart in his intriguing article "Spatial Form and Color in *The Waves*" tries to explain Woolf's idea of spatial form: "For Virginia Woolf, childhood consists of 'many bright colors; many distinct sounds; some human beings . . . several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene they cut out; and all surrounded by a vast space' (86). The Hampton Court episode, for I hesitate to call it a scene in a novel that is really one long, continuous scene, encompasses all of these "moments of being" that Woolf describes, and while Stewart narrows his focus to the visual perception of space (color) in *The Waves*, my study tries to emphasize more than just the visual perception of the prose. Eric Warner observes that it is as if "Woolf has 'concentrated' those significant moments of previous novels, pared away all else

but this, ‘the essential thing’” (53). The essential thing is the blending of moments in time. For example, Rhoda describes her thoughts:

Here in this dining-room you see the antlers and the tumblers; the salt-cellars; the yellow stains on the table-cloth. ‘Waiter!’ says Bernard. ‘Bread!’ says Susan. And the waiter comes; he brings bread. But I see the side of a cup like a mountain and only parts of antlers, and the brightness on the side of that jug like a crack in darkness with wonder and terror. (223)

While all the action is going on, the reader is frozen in the thought of Rhoda who does not see the action as a sequence of events but instead views them as parts of her unified spatial existence.

Stewart aptly describes Woolf’s prose in *The Waves* as “cyclic and organic” (90).

Wright’s Usonian houses can equally be described in those terms. Another feature Wright expanded on beginning with the Jacobs House was floor to ceiling windows. An immediate and organic connection with nature (the windows were at the back of the house, not the front facing the street) made it impossible not to pause and relish in the beauty of the tree patterns on the floor, not to mention the illusory connection with nature through the panes. As with the Robie house and its long line of windows, the Jacobs House intensified that spatial effect with the enlargement of the windows from the ceiling to the floor. With the Paul R. Hanna House (1936) Wright changed the design of the Usonian home from a L-shaped design to a hexagonal design: “The hexagon was more natural to human movement, allowing greater spatial freedom than the square” (Twombly 250).



Figure 19: Jean S. and Paul R. Hanna Residence S.235 in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993



Figure 20: Jean S. and Paul R. Hanna Residence S.235: Dining Room in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993



Figure 21: Jean S. and Paul R. Hanna Residence: Workspace in *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* by William Allin Storrer © 1993

Moving gradually toward a circular house, Wright’s hexagonal design is comparable to Woolf’s movement from separate consciousnesses to a singular one. Once again, Bernard, who can easily be labeled the center of the collective consciousness (or the center of the circle), muses on his identity: “But observe how dots and dashes are beginning, as I walk, to run themselves into continuous lines, how things are losing the bald, the separate identity that they had as I walked up those steps. The world is beginning to move past me like the banks of a hedge when the train starts, like the waves of the sea when a steamer moves” (188). Woolf’s “dots and dashes” are like the old rectangular shape of houses; the square plans of many homes were transformed into “60- and 120-degree angles [that] produced an entirely different feeling than the rectangular

arrangement” (Twombly 250-51). Wright is creating movement with the hexagonal space; Woolf is doing the same with her sextuple study of character.

In 1938 Wright continued his organic evolution with a house for Ralph Jester in California. The design of the rooms physically demands that the dweller move inside and outside to move from place to place. Twombly observes, “The lounging space with its fireplace, the master bedroom-bath-breakfast nook complex, and the dining-kitchen-valet facilities were not attached to each other but stood separately on the glazed interior patio, making it necessary to go ‘outside’ from room to room” (251). Twombly adds, “Perhaps more than any other Wright residence, the Jester project brought ‘the outside in’” (251). The unique structure of the Jester House is similar to Woolf’s structure of *The Waves*. For example, the organization of Woolf’s novel with italicized pages here and there that break with the thoughts of the characters and present observations of nature is an example, I argue, of another step Woolf has taken towards interiority in the novel. Instead of using a character, however, as James did so wonderfully in *The Wings of the Dove*, Woolf actually uses the novel structure itself and gets into the interior of the book. Wright achieves this phenomenon equally with the spatial organization of the Jacobs House. “Wright did away with the dining room in favor of a table connecting the kitchen and living areas, which were further separated by the large fireplace. The effect was to merge the three rooms into one” (Twombly 243). Woolf’s italicized breaks in *The Waves* are like doing away with the typical walled dining room and replacing the walls with just a table to connect two separate areas, uniting them into one space. The thoughts of the six characters follow the pattern of the waves until the end of the novel when Percival, a character that never speaks, has died, and the remaining friends are forced to deal with their feelings about him. Woolf simply ends

the novel with “*The waves broke on the shore*” (297). And the present moment, which has lasted the entire length of the novel, is finally broken.

“The Usonian house, then, aims to be a *natural* performance, one that is integral to the site; integral to the environment; integral to the life of the inhabitants” Wright says (112). *The Waves*, like Wright’s Usonian vision, is a text that is integral to the reader—they are connected from the opening passage to the final sentence. Eric Warner observes that “Woolf said she never wanted to write another ‘novel’: did she succeed in this ambition? or is *The Waves* a novel after all?” (97). Warner’s question, as he notes, has been endlessly debated, yet Warner goes on to answer the question in a way that I find conducive to my study in spatial form: “In the same way that the characters are suspended above the events of their own lives, *the Waves* seems to hover above a ‘novel’, always pointing to what it is removed from” (98). Once again, a circular, polyphonic structure like *The Waves* demands the reader work to fuse the many voices of the novel into a unified being. The constant present moment is really a series of individual spatial realizations that hover around the reader until the final few pages when Bernard takes the identity of all the characters: “There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, ‘I am you’” (288-89). *The Waves* is, as Wright says about his houses, a “natural” experience. Bernard has sighed like the unconscious sleeper and has even become one with nature: “And in me too the wave rises” (297). William James has a phrase he uses called “subjective synthesis.” By this he means “This sort of *bringing of things together into the object of a single judgment*” (213). Wright says that man “*meant* to make these cave-buildings beautiful. Then was architecture born” (349). In the work of Woolf and Wright, literature and architecture are indeed fused together—unified in spatial form and poetic beauty.

## CONCLUSION

In my original paper for a graduate class in Modernist Studies, I compared the work of Henry James and Frank Lloyd Wright. I was excited about the research and the obvious similarities I uncovered between the two artists. When I decided to extend the small paper into a thesis, I added Virginia Woolf, and with the three artists, I now feel that a continuous journey into spatial form and consciousness is more complete. However, only time will tell if the literary and architectural connections explored in the thesis will promote further research or simply just fade away into oblivion. Joseph Frank, writing almost thirty years after his essay on spatial form, decided that his concentration on *Nightwood* might not have been the right choice. “While unquestionably a work of remarkable literary quality, *Nightwood* was not destined, as the passage of time has shown, to exercise a major influence on the course of the novel,” (110) Frank observes. He goes on to say that “Much more influential have been the efforts of stream-of-consciousness writers such as Joyce, Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf to break up language itself so that it would reproduce the movements of consciousness either on the reflexive or prereflexive level” (110). The four novels I have chosen are already well-established literary influences, so unlike Frank, I do not anticipate twenty or thirty years from now regretting or second-guessing my choices. What I do anticipate in the future is an expansion of my research into spatial form in the novel and the home, or more broadly, the exploration of texts in conjunction with architecture, not just in the Modernist period, but in other eras as well. While it may be difficult, perhaps impossible, to develop any concrete spatial form connections in other periods, certainly spatial and consciousness techniques are at work in both disciplines throughout history. “Indeed, it is clear that all through the history of the novel a tension has existed between the linear-temporal nature of its medium (language) and the spatial elements required by its nature as a



work of art,” Frank says. Modernism has been ideal for a study in spatial form; whether other periods will prove as apt a study is yet to be discovered.

My study of Frank Lloyd Wright has been intellectually rewarding and quite stimulating, but the thrill of blending the ideas of Henry James and Virginia Woolf with Wright has been ultimately satisfying. Frank’s theory of spatial form has only been complemented by the Reader Response theories of Stanley Fish and certainly the consciousness and mind explorations of William James and Sigmund Freud. The merging of the reader with the text and the dweller with the house transforms the act of reading—not just the novel, but the house as well. Wright, in one of his musings on democracy, makes an excellent point about the way the mind can be manipulated: “Democracy is constantly in danger from mobocracy—the rising tide of as yet unqualified herd-instinct. Mechanized mediocrity. The *conditioned* mind instead of the *enlightened* mind” (63). Wright, like James and Woolf, was constantly fighting the tendency to reproduce the same structures over and over. I have attempted to highlight the breaks from previous building and novelistic structures with my study of James, Woolf and Wright. But without understanding the importance of Fish’s theory and the important developments in consciousness technique, the innovative uses of space in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Wings of the Dove* cannot, I argue, be fully realized in terms of spatial form and interiority. Likewise, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, though certainly explorations in form, lose a great deal of meaning without understanding and appreciating the unlimited interaction between reader and text.

The term “organic” has been used continuously throughout my work, and deserves more attention here. The exploration of character, interiority, space and time in all the novels I have chosen are a continual study of what can be described as an organic unity with the reader and the



text. Wright's quest for organic unity in his homes is no less dependent on his vision of the dweller's total experience. Henry James said the following about the novel:

One writes as one can--& also as one sees, judges, feels, thinks. And I feel & think so much on the ignoble state to which in this age of every cheapness, I see the novel, as a form, reduced, that there is doubtless greatly, with me, the element of what I would as well as of what I 'can.' At any rate my stuff, such as it is, is inevitable. (376-77)

James was indeed writing as he saw and felt; the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* is a narrator that the reader can "see" in many different ways, yet each interpretation only reinforces the organic unity of the text. James's "inevitable" writing is actually a merging of reader and text—a natural, organic union. The reader is frozen *with* the governess when she sees the apparition outside the window, and whether the reader chooses to believe the ghost actually exists or only exists in the fanciful mind of the character, does not sever the unified present moment experience. Additionally, the reader's psychological journey in *The Wings of the Dove* with Kate and Milly defines interiority in the novel, which ultimately leads to unification comparable to Wright's organic Prairie homes. "Appropriate 'character' is inevitable to all architecture if organic," (216) Wright says, and certainly in Woolf's novels, the gradual merging of many characters into a unified whole captures Wright's vision of structure and nature becoming one entity. Incorporating Fish's active reader into the home is the reason that structure and nature can become one; without the dweller to *read* and *interpret* the space, the organic unity is only an inactive text, so to speak, just lying around waiting to be picked up.

Fish's interpretive community theory is certainly applicable to the time period I have studied. The Modernists were arguably "a community made up of those who share interpretive

strategies” ( Fish 161). James may have had one foot in the Victorian period and one foot in the Modernist period, but his work with consciousness technique, especially in *The Wings of the Dove*, connects him to writers like Woolf and other innovative thinkers—those who wanted definite change. Wright also straddled two eras, but like James, his work propels him forward into the modernist age. Woolf, though she grew up in a Victorian household also broke free from standard literary form and uniquely experimented with time and space in her novels.

For example, Woolf’s examination of consciousness in *The Waves* is a plea to the reader to think differently about the sequencing of a text. In 1945, Joseph Frank felt the same way: “A good deal of modern literature makes no sense if read *only* as a sequence” (xi). Frank is indeed a “modern” reader, but can or should we place Woolf in such a contained category? If Fish’s conception of interpretive communities is plausible, then William James and Sigmund Freud must also be members of the community, for they certainly share many of the same interpretive strategies on the human mind. Woolf has Bernard in *The Waves* question the workings of his mind, reflecting James and Freud’s work: “More and more bubbles into my mind as I talk, images and images. Why, I ask, can I not finish the letter that I am writing? For my room is always scattered with unfinished letters” (84). The “modernist” interpretive community is composed of Bernard’s “images and images”—a community of writers, philosophers, psychoanalysts, architects, and readers, just to name a few. So, a definite interpretive community has been comfortably established in my work. But Frank revisited his 1945 essay on spatial form and published *The Idea of Spatial Form* in 1991. And here I am, writing in 2006. How long will the interpretive community continue? And where or when can we say that it actually began? Part of my goal in connecting literature and architecture is to continue not just a community of readers who will see exactly as I do, but ones that will see what Fish calls “the

opposing positions they [communities] make possible” (15). Reading texts spatially, rather than just temporally, is a definitive way to approach a novel, and incorporating Frank’s ideas on spatial form has been as he says “very helpful” to many people “for *their* reading, and I can only leave it to the future to decide whether this will continue to be the case” (xi). Ideally, my work will challenge me to continue studying the possibilities of an architectural and literary marriage, realizing that opposing positions will surface, but anticipating the enormous, potential similarities and a room full of “unfinished letters.”

Lyndall Gordon makes a keen observation of Woolf: “Following James, she wished to establish the novel as a form of great art” (182). While “great art” is a relative term, the novel did change form with Woolf and James. And there is no question that the idea of building the private residence changed with Wright. I have concentrated on the interaction of reader and text and dweller and home to create the present moment—something that I argue is an art. Spatial form in the novel or in the home is a result of merging thoughts together that may seem to be separate entities, but because of the use of space, time, consciousness, and interiority, the separate entities are fused into one unified moment. “For one moment only,” Louis says in *The Waves*, “Before the chain breaks, before disorder returns, see us fixed, see us displayed, see us held in a vice” (142). Indeed by looking at the self in new and innovative ways in the late-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth centuries, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and Frank Lloyd Wright hold us in that fixed moment for as long, and as often, as we would like.

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